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ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

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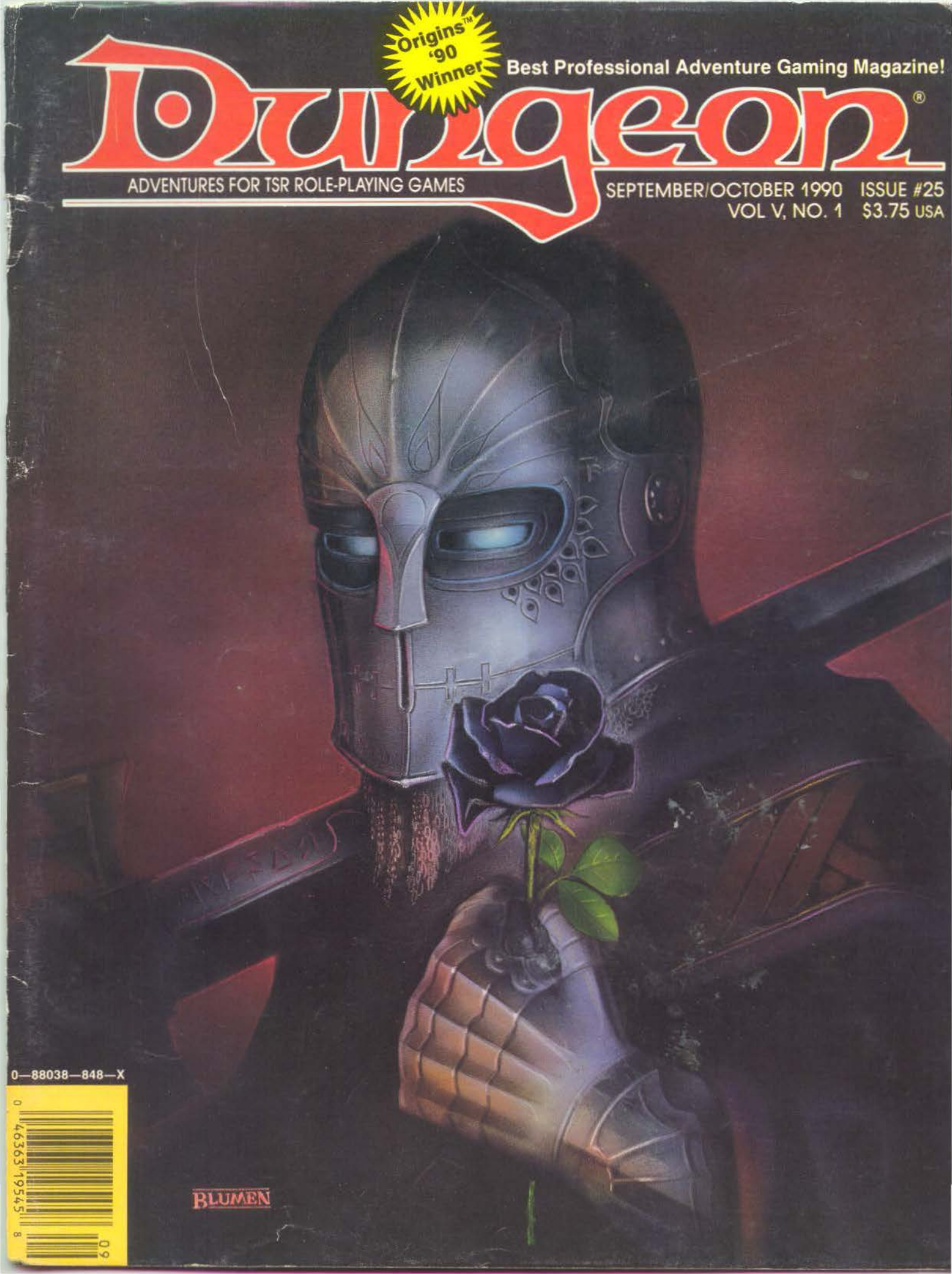

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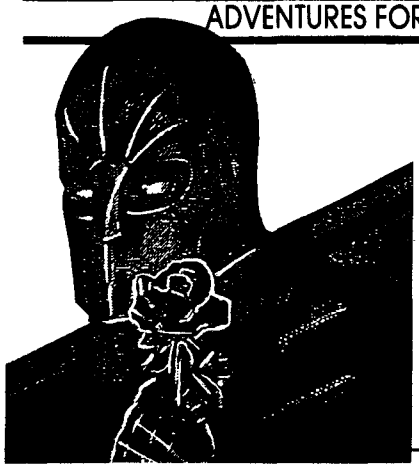

COVER: If a red rose is for love, what does a black one mean? John Blumen's cover painting gives no clue; you'll have to read "A Rose for Talakara."

The More Things Change . . .

As you may have noticed, we've been gently tinkering with the magazine for several issues. Some of the changes are subtle, such as using shaded information sidebars (for new monster statistics, random-encounter charts, etc.) instead of lumping all miscellaneous information at the end of the module. Other changes have been more noticeable: the new cover stock with full-color inner covers, and the decision to include non-TSR advertising.

There are some changes you can't miss in this issue. Check out our first MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game adventure, Allen Varney's "Hellfire Hostages." Many of you have asked for adventures for other TSR games, so we've decided to try an experiment.

But we need your feedback on this and future changes we've got up our sleeves. We can't really know if something is a good idea until we try it—and hear about it. I know we can't please everyone all the time, but we would like all our readers to feel that those parts of the magazine they *do* enjoy are worth the price. So let us know what you think, not just this month but whenever we do something particularly useful (or particularly dumb).

The staff of DUNGEON Adventures would like to thank all our readers who voted this magazine the ORIGINS™ Award for "Best Professional Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1989," presented by the Academy of Adventure Gaming and Design. This award was presented at ORIGINS '90 gaming convention on June 29, 1990.

Barbara G. Young

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Vol. V, No. 1

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Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset. . . .

"Ulysses," Alfred, Lord Tennyson

LETTERS

"Best of" Coming?

I was wondering if there is a *Best of DUNGEON® Adventures* underway? I, like many others, unfortunately didn't subscribe to DUNGEON Adventures until later and missed the first few issues. I'd love to get my hands on the first adventure with the dragon Flame ("Into the Fire," issue #1), especially after playing "Out of the Ashes" (issue #17). Grant Boucher is a superior writer.

Thank you so much for your great magazine. The whole staff deserves applause.

John Schultz
Lansing, Illinois

We don't have any plans to publish a Best of DUNGEON Adventures *anthology at the present time, but quite a few back issues of the magazine are still available (including issue #1). For a free catalog, write to The Mail Order Hobby Shop, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147, U.S.A.*

Tips for DMs

I would like to know if it is possible to have a suggestions page where DMs could provide tips on ways to keep track of information, methods of designing adventures, etc.

For example, I use scenes in travel brochures and magazines to quickly explain different terrain types. Catalogs often have interesting pictures as well, and illustrations of rugs, vases, rings, bracelets, or just about anything can be cut out and attached to 3" × 5" cards. These cards make treasure descriptions more interesting and easier to keep track of. Also, a strange-looking item or scene can often provide enough inspiration for an entire adventure.

Mark Wolff
Godfrey, Illinois

Readers should feel free to send in any hints they would like to share. We'll run them right here in the "Letters" column.

One of my favorite sources of visual aids is National Geographic *magazine. All those mountains, deserts, sunken ships, and ancient treasures are perfect for the sort of visual descriptions you suggest.*

Cover Stock Shock

I hate the new cover stock. It shrivels when it gets damp. Everything else is perfect. In fact, everything *was* perfect until you changed the cover stock. Put it back. Put it back. Put it back! And don't change anything else, either. I'd even pay the difference for the heavier stock.

Clay Toombs
Chandler, Arizona

Make 'Em Squirm!

I would like to congratulate Steve Gilbert and Bill Slavicek on the writing of a truly superb adventure: "Tallow's Deep" (issue #18). Four characters walked in; two *ran* out. The traps were well planned and creative, and Grishog was one impressive goblin. I would highly recommend this module to any DM who likes to see his players squirm.

Brandon Cheng
Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania

Issues & Answers

I have been playing both the AD&D® and D&D® games for over nine years now and have been a DM for five. I have been a subscriber to your magazine since the beginning and find it to be a priceless resource to my campaign. My group of six regular players meets at my house every Monday night to enjoy a game, and sometimes also on Tuesday if we can't fit the whole adventure into one night. We have been doing this for almost two years now, exclusively playing the modules in your magazine.

Almost since your magazine began, I have seen much controversy in the "Letters" department. So I questioned each of my players about some of the more talked-about issues.

First I asked them whether or not they still wanted to see D&D game modules printed. There was almost no argument. Even though we play more AD&D games than D&D games, they all thought abolishing the latter would be unfair.

Next I asked them how they felt about boxed text. The decision was unanimous. No! Personally, I agree with that. You see, as a DM, my job is to give the players an accurate description of what they encounter. I don't need or want someone else to do that for me. It is my duty and pleasure to read the adventure completely before the game, and to put it into my own words. Not necessarily better words, but if I always read the description verbatim, my players would fall asleep. In issue #23, you said that the general vote of the letters was leaning in favor of the boxed text. That scared me. That's one of the reasons I decided to sit down and write this letter, and I hope others who don't care for the boxed text do the same.

I have found many complaints and rebuttals concerning solo adventures, but only four letters defending them. Make that five. Most of those that gripe about solos say that they are useless because PC parties cannot play in them. But, as a DM, my only chance to run a player character is with a solo adventure. Besides, any DM can get ideas for a dungeon of his own, and solos take up only a little space in the magazine. The rate of one solo adventure per three issues is fine with me.

Finally, my players and I are tired of people belittling this magazine with their complaints. The cover and inside artwork is great, even if it is a little corny at times. The modules printed are excellent, and I can always expect my

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PCs to leave the game table with a smile after an adventure.

Let's get serious. No magazine is perfect, but DUNGEON Adventures does come close.

Fred Bicknese
Coraopolis, Pennsylvania

I'd really like to cut off the boxed-text debate with this issue, so please don't take Fred up on his call for more letters. I have to side with the pro-box faction on this one. The boxes contain descriptive information in a narrative format. The DM can, as noted, read or paraphrase *the information as he sees fit. Those of you who don't like to read the boxed information verbatim can use what's in the box just as you would use a non-boxed paragraph of information.*

I would love to print one solo adventure every two or three issues, but I don't have any to print. Writing numbered-paragraph solos can be very frustrating, and I can understand why some writers who attempt it never do so again. However, I'd also like to see some one-DM/one-player adventures, for those times when you can't get a larger group together or need to do something special with only one character (see "Tomb It May Concern" in issue #22).

RPGs: Tools of Whom?

After reading your editorial in DUNGEON Adventures #22, I had to re-read it to find just what it was that I didn't like. While I agree with you on most of your guidelines (except for "honorable, heroic goals," but I run a grittier campaign), I was annoyed with your comment that "role-playing games show the moral superiority of good triumphing over evil and are therefore not the tools of the devil."

Your statement came as a surprise because it seems to contradict the stand that TSR has had, that there is no connection between satanism and gaming. Yet it's just the flip side of the same coin to say that gaming is a tool against the devil (by moral example, at least) [*Did I say that?—Barbara*].

I've been playing for eight years and have found that the AD&D game is a way for people to get together and have some fun, not participate in the real-life struggle of good vs. evil. I've found that worries over religion and mental health were mostly spread by well-meaning but misinformed individuals. However, it can hardly be said that DUNGEON magazine doesn't know about role-playing games.

Allan Seyberth
Ft. Drum, New York

More From King Thar

Now lissen der, ya need ta come ta Udhgar Palace. Dis is da secend leter Iv had ta send ya, an Im geting sick an tired ov it! Der be to mor errers in "Rank Amatures" [issue #22]! Da first won be dat ya shud rol a 1d10, not 1d8 fer taproom roomers. Da next errer be dat da secend pairugraf in da Grate Hal be repeatd in da tird pairugraf.

Thar, King of Broken Lands
Cheif of Orcus Rex
Supreem Commander of da Legion

Our travel agent is working on the reservations.

Talk With a Horse, of Course

I recently began reading DUNGEON Adventures, and I want to congratulate you on your wonderful magazine, especially issue #23. Willie Walsh's excellent "The Pyramid of Jenkel" is going to provide interesting material for my next AD&D entertainment. This mini-adventure could not be more suited to my characters if they had a paladin in their midst! Thank you.

I do have one problem, however. My cleric/ranger player and her druid consort (another player) really enjoy utilizing their *speak with animals* spells. But in DUNGEON modules, there is very little description of what the important animals know; e.g., the runaway horse in "The Pyramid of Jenkel." However, all in all, I want to congratulate you people on an incredible magazine!

Russ Gilman
Springfield, Oregon

A Den in Denmark

First of all, I want to thank you for a brilliant magazine that really helps me in my role-playing. In Denmark, FRP games are very difficult to obtain (there is only one shop in Denmark that specializes in FRP games, and I live very far from it), and they are also very expensive (you have to pay at least two times the dollar price). So it is not often I get new adventures.

But recently, a friend showed me DUNGEON Magazine, and I knew that it was the solution to my problems. I have bought the magazine ever since and never regretted it for a minute.

I especially liked issue #22 with the "Rank Amateurs" adventure. I have wanted to play with humanoid PCs ever since I bought GAZ 10 *The Orcs of Thar.* Please publish more humanoid adventures.

Finally, I would like to congratulate you on your fabulous covers and interior artwork. They are really good!

If you publish this letter, could you please print my full address so others can write to me.

Michael Schmidt
Vestergade 12
8850 Bjerringbro
Denmark

Killer Humanoid Syndrome

Thanks for the ". . . Tips on Home-Grown Modules" [issue #23]. Such clear advice works both ways, not only to upgrade submissions, but to improve home-grown scenarios for at-home consumption, too.

And thanks as well for the magazine itself. You wouldn't believe how my game world has grown to make places for some of the scenarios in DUNGEON Adventures that have caught my imagination.

Your offer to print full addresses [of letter writers] was welcome. I'd like to hear from other gamers, too. I do a variant (penpal-style) AD&D 1st Edition game. Or, I'd be happy to just talk games.

Oh! What *does* Mr. Stump (issue #23) mean by saying he hopes "this will put the killer humanoid syndrome to rest for good"? I am never so delighted as when I find a scenario that makes good use of those monsters it's just plain difficult to put to sensible use. Examples? "Deception Pass," of course. "Encounter in the Wildwood" [issue #19]. Three cheers for Mr. Walsh! A mismatched lot woven together with fine inventiveness. And the killer goblins in "Tallow's Deep" [issue #18] by Gilbert and Slavicek. More!

E. J. ("Jo") Philagios
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Denison, Texas 75020

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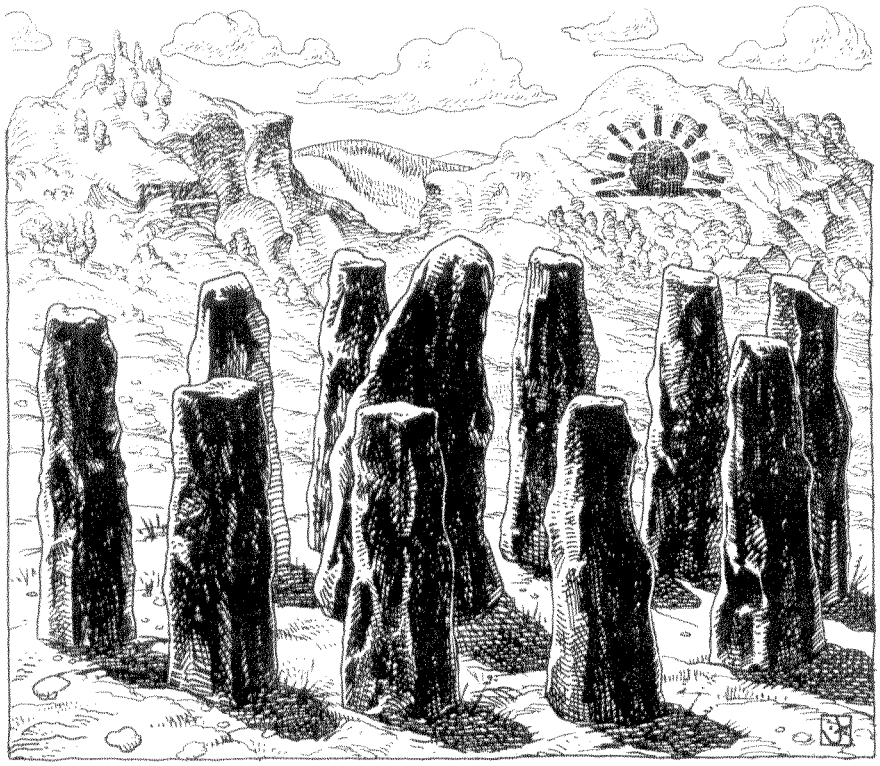


THE STANDING STONES OF SUNDOWN

BY PAUL MAY

The door to the Abyss can be opened with good intentions.

Artwork by Jerry Tiritilli

Paul May is studying for a Ph.D. in plasma chemistry at the University of Bristol (England) and has been playing the AD&D® game for over eight years. Paul writes: "I live close to both Stonehenge and Avebury (famous for its stone circle and white horse chalk mark). While visiting them I had the idea to write a scenario based on what these mysterious relics might mean."

"The Standing Stones of Sundown" is an AD&D 2nd Edition adventure for a party of primarily good-aligned PCs. It can be played with a single PC of any class, so long as that PC is above 8th level and well equipped. Alternatively, a small party of 3-4 PCs of about 4th to 6th level each (about 18 total levels) can use the scenario. The module can be slipped into any existing campaign on occasions when the DM finds himself short of players because of last-minute cancellations. The village of Sundown is a rural setting in a temperate climate. It is slightly off the beaten track, a peaceful farming community far from the hustle and bustle of city life.

For the Dungeon Master

The village of Sundown in the county of the Vales has existed for thousands of years. Evidence of early habitation on the site is present in the form of a large chalk marking of a setting sun etched into the hillside, and a ring of 11 standing stones just outside the present village's boundaries.

Unknown to the villagers, these stones have been the magical prison for a creature from the outer planes. This creature, a type of vrock, normally resided in the depths of the Abyss. Five thousand years ago, however, it began menacing Sundown and other nearby villages. The vrock, Jaazzpaa by name, was fond of popping into the Prime Material plane using his magical *chalice of plane travel,* picking up a tasty human snack, and returning to the Abyss.

The shamans of the 10 villages devised a cunning plan to rid themselves of this scourge. They combined all of their magical abilities to lure the creature into a carefully prepared trap. Then they cast on the vrock a powerful spell, *stonecase,* that acted as a primitive *flesh to stone* spell, encasing him in a rock prison. (See the sidebar for a description of this spell.)

Casting this spell was quite a sacrifice for the shamans, since in order to make the spell permanent, they too had to be turned to stone. Their 10 stones formed a ring around the vrock's central stone, their combined magical emanations confining the foul creature in his trap. The grateful villagers engraved a huge chalk mark of a setting sun, their symbol for danger, into the hillside to warn others not to interfere with the circle. So it remained for thousands of years, until the original purpose of the stones and meaning of the chalk symbol had been lost.

The village's inquisitive mage, Arris, had recently been investigating the history of the stones. He found evidence (from an unreliable source) that the stones were once innocent farmers who had been accidentally turned to stone. Even though this idea was unlikely, Arris became fixated on it and decided to test the theory.

Arris was of too low a level to cast *stone to flesh* himself, so he purchased a *ring of depetrification* and used it to dispel the magic on one of the stones. This not only released a primitive shaman but destroyed the power of the stone ring prison. Jaazzpaa was free—and he was angry! He killed the mage and the shaman using his *energy drain* spell, then took refuge in the woods near the village.

Thousands of years of imprisonment have sapped the vrock's strength and powers, so he needs time and food to recover. He knows that he is trapped on this plane until he can regain his *chalice of plane travel,* which was discovered in a field near the village a few hundred years ago and given to the local church for use in religious ceremonies. Jaazzpaa cannot enter the church to recover the chalice, since the ground is holy and consecrated, so he is biding his time, gaining strength day by day and thinking of subtle ways to regain his property.

The mysterious death of their mage and the disappearance of two of the standing stones (once the shaman and the vrock) have sent a wave of fear through the superstitious villagers. There is talk of evil spirits and bad omens, especially since it is only a few days before the annual religious festival, the Blessing of the Seeds.

The essence of this module is investigation and problem solving. The PCs should gradually begin to put together all the pieces, until by the end they should know roughly what to expect. Jaazzpaa will still be a terrifying opponent, no matter how well prepared the PCs are. The DM should emphasize the role-playing aspects of the game, since the PCs will have to interview several of the villagers in order to learn information and obtain clues.

For the Player Characters

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> After hours of riding through the countryside, you begin to think about making camp for the night. Although traveling has been easy over the past few days, you feel a night's rest at a comfortable inn is long overdue. You know that the village of Sundown is only a short distance ahead, so you decide to make it your destination for tonight.
>
> As your mounts wearily trudge up the next in a succession of seemingly endless hills, you are finally rewarded with the sight of the village below in the valley. It seems to be a pleasant community of some 40 houses, most of which appear to be farms, although there is a strange circular ruin on the outskirts of the town. You can't make out any more detail from this distance.
>
> The village is bordered on three sides by newly plowed fields that are neatly arranged behind the houses. The northern edge of the village borders a lush green woodland whose trees sway gently in the soft breeze.
>
> As you look across the valley to the far hillside, you are surprised to see a startling white symbol engraved into the greenery. It appears to be a stylized representation of a sunset and covers about 100' from side to side. The white image looms over the village like a giant all-seeing eye. You've heard of chalk marks like this in other villages, but you don't know what they signify. This ancient symbol must have given the village its name. Intrigued, you start to make your way down toward the village. However, the horses toss their heads and prance uneasily, appearing reluctant to descend.

The horses sense the presence of the evil creature in the valley below. If the PCs use a *speak with animals* spell, the horses say that they are very frightened, but they don't know why. It's just a vague, uneasy feeling of something not being right.

The PCs might decide to ignore the nervousness of their horses and ride on to the village. If so, the horses become increasingly restless. There is a 1-in-3 chance that each horse will panic and throw its rider to the ground for 1-6 hp damage. The horses so affected then races off in panic, taking all their PCs' possessions. It will take an hour's thorough searching before the horses are found. If the PCs walk alongside their horses, their comforting presence will calm the animals and allow them to be led to the village. If the PCs don't have mounts, none of this will occur.

The Village of Sundown

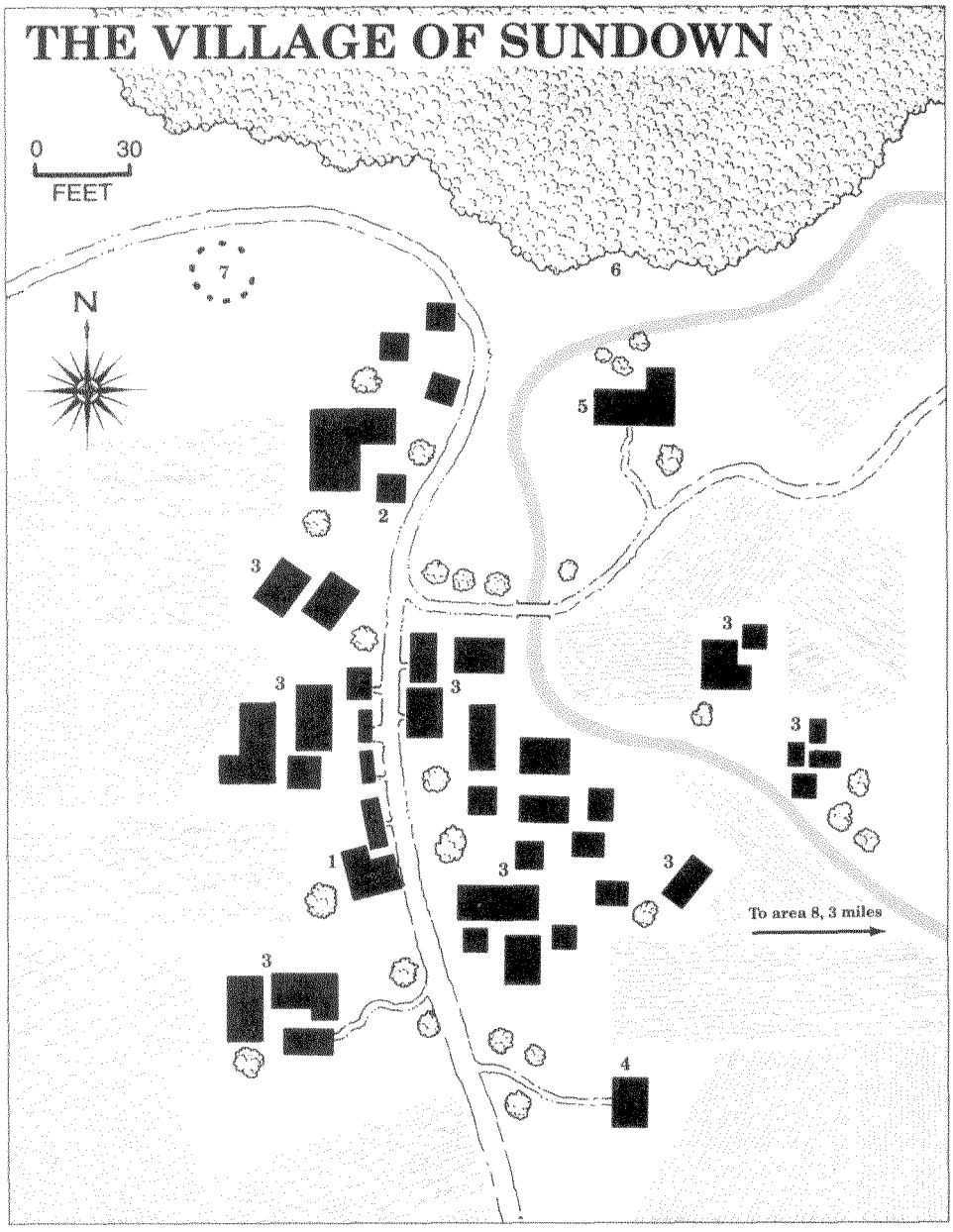
The DM should try to make the PCs feel uneasy as they enter the village. The nervousness of the horses should have warned the PCs that something is up, and the reaction of the villagers to strangers should convince them of that. The DM should make several subtle references to the chalk sunset symbol "watching" over the village.

There is an air of heightened tension in the town. The villagers appear friendly but are very wary of strangers. Some give the PCs anxious glances and try to avoid them. If questioned, they

Stonecase

This spell is no longer known, having been forgotten in the mists of time. It resembled a primitive form of *flesh to stone* spell, except that it was more powerful and more cumbersome to cast. The petrified victim was also encased in a large rectangular block of stone the height of the victim. The victim of this spell remained so encased until the magic was dispelled or the spell duration expired.

The spell required at least five clerics or mages to combine their magical abilities for it to function. Even so, the spell lasted only 50 turns. In order to make the effects permanent, the spell-casters were required to form a ring around the victim's stone and then use the spell on themselves. The magical stone ring thus created acted as a focus for magical energy and could last indefinitely, unless the ring were ever broken.



direct the sleepy PCs to the tavern, the only place in the village that has rooms for rent.

1. The Witch's Brew Tavern. This is the main social meeting place of the village. It is usually quite full of farmers and laborers relaxing after a hard day in the fields. The tavern is owned by a plump, jovial man named Geddi Corncutter who employs two serving girls to help him run the place.

Geddi Corncutter: AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; F2; hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16, C 15; ML 10; dagger, club.

Geddi used to be quite a warrior when he was younger, but now he has retired to his little place in the country. He keeps a club behind the bar to deal with drunks but only rarely has to use it. He is a likeable character with a funny story for every occasion. The tavern keeper often amuses his clientele with anecdotes and jokes (example: "What do you call an orc with a brain?—A liar!" "What do you call an orc with only half a brain?—Gifted!"). The DM might like to prepare several such witticisms to role-play Geddi to his full potential. The tavern keeper is widely liked in the village, both for his personality and the ale (Olde Goatscratcher) that he brews and serves.

When the PCs enter the tavern, all conversation stops and the farmers all turn to stare at the strangers. After a few seconds, they continue their conversations but occasionally cast anxious glances toward the newcomers.

The tavern is a large room about 30′ square with a bar down one wall. The ground floor also has the kitchen and several smaller rooms for private meetings. Several bedrooms on the floor above can be rented to travelers. The layout of the tavern is unimportant, but the DM can design it if he so chooses.

Arranged decoratively on the walls in the bar area are farming implements and accessories of ancient design, such as a cartwheel, an ox yoke, and even a plow! These are antiques that Geddi feels give the place a homey feel.

Hung on the wall above the bar are two sickles forming a cross shape. The left-hand sickle is old and rusted but of a very ancient design. The right-hand implement looks newer and seems in perfect condition. Centuries before, this sickle was magically enchanted to remain sharp forever. If the PCs cast *detect magic* or *identify* spells on this sickle, they can discover this. They will need Geddi's permission first, of course, before they start rearranging his furnishings to cast magical spells. If they correctly tell Geddi that his sickle is magical, he will be thrilled (he didn't know it was such a special item). The tavern keeper will let the PCs have a room free of charge for doing him this service. For game purposes, treat the sickle as a *scimitar* +2 worth 1,000 gp.

After the PCs have been in the tavern for a few minutes, they are approached by a middle-aged man wearing a white robe. He introduces himself as Father Matthias, the local priest of Sundown. He asks if the PCs would care to visit his church to worship. He has three reasons for asking this: First, he wants to find out if the PCs are of good people. Second, he wants to see if he can obtain a donation for the Church Roof Restoration Fund from these "rich" adventurers. Third and most important, he wants to ascertain whether these PCs are capable and willing to help the village in its present crisis.

If the PCs say they will gladly visit the church, the priest smiles broadly and engages the party in small talk for a

while before leaving to attend to his duties. If good-aligned PCs decline to go to the church, the DM should think about giving each adventurer a small deity-sent affliction, such as a boil on the nose, as a warning.

Father Matthias: AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; C4; hp 15; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; W 16, Ch 16; ML 10; spells: *bless, cure light wounds* (×2), *detect evil, light, augury, find traps, know alignment, speak with animals;* scrolls: *tongues, speak with dead, flame strike;* holy symbol, mace.

Father Matthias is a kindly man in his late forties. He is highly respected in the village, and not only because he is its only priest. His face is compassionate but has recently become lined with worry. The talk of evil spirits in the village has unnerved him. Some of the villagers think that the festival of the Blessing of the Seeds is a pagan ritual and should be abandoned. There is talk that the disappearance of two of the ancient stones and the mysterious death of the mage, Arris, were warnings sent by the gods. The priest is worried that this might be true and is having a crisis of faith as a result. He desperately wants the mystery cleared up.

If the PCs ask Geddi, Father Matthias, or any of the tavern patrons what has happened in the village to make everyone so nervous, read or paraphrase the following, attributing these remarks to the NPC so addressed:

> "We've had a spot of trouble here recently. Our local wizard, Arris, died two days ago. His body was found lying beside the Witches of the Glade. He was an eccentric old man, but he was always polite and pleasant to everyone. They say that there were no signs of injuries on his body . . . just a look of terror frozen on his face. Also, two of the witch stones are missing. The people are calling it an evil omen, especially coming so close to the festival of the Blessing of the Seeds. Several of the villagers have seen a shadowy figure in the woods. There's talk of evil spirits, and everybody's getting very jumpy."

The body of Arris is being stored in a small building (area 2) adjoining the village hall. He is to be buried tomorrow, although some of the more superstitious villagers say that his body should be burned ("You can never be too careful where dark magic is concerned.").

The "Witches of the Glade" is the local name given to the group of standing stones just outside the village. The name comes from one of the legends about their origin. Every time a PC asks someone in the village about the stones, roll 1d8 and consult the Stones' Origin Rumors table.

The festival of the Blessing of the Seeds is an annual event. Every year the local priest blesses the seeds sown in the fields using holy water from the church. The whole village turns out for the occasion, and it is regarded by many as a necessary precaution to allow the corn to grow healthy and strong next year. The festival is planned to occur in three days' time.

During the Night

If the PCs decide to go to bed, leaving further investigation until tomorrow, read the following to the PCs:

> After such a long and eventful evening, you say goodnight to Geddi and make your way upstairs to your room. The chamber is surprisingly well equipped with good-quality antique furniture. A window overlooks the main street. You remove your travel-stained clothes and settle down gratefully for the night.

Just after midnight, the PCs are awakened by shouts from the street below their window. Several villagers are standing in a semicircle carrying clubs. In the center is a small figure dressed in a cloak. As the PCs watch, the figure in the cloak leaps at one of the villagers and tosses him aside as if he were a rag doll. A second villager attempts to hit the figure with a club, but the being dodges easily, knocking the man unconscious with one powerful blow. Some of the other farmers manage solid hits with their clubs, but the creature just shrugs the blows off and continues fighting.

This is a ju-ju zombie, created when Jaazzpaa used his *energy drain* spell to kill Arris. The body has reanimated and broken out of the storage shed (area 2) to cause havoc.

Arris Dreamweaver (ju-ju zombie): Int low; AL N(E); AC 6; MV 9; HD 3+12; hp 24; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; SA attack as a 6-HD creature; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; half damage from fire-based attacks and piercing or blunt weapons; unaffected by mind-affecting spells such as *charms* or *holds* as well as poison, *magic missile* and *cold* spells; MR special; ML special; XP 975; MC.

If the PCs ignore the disturbance and go back to sleep, the combined force of all the farmers of the village (aided by Father Matthias's *flame strike* spell) eventually defeat the zombie, although at a cost of several dead and injured farmers. The body of the zombie is set alight and burned using flaming oil. If the PCs rush out in their nightclothes to help the farmers, the DM should remember to adjust their armor classes accordingly. If the PCs spend time putting on their armor before going to help, there is a 3-in-6 chance that the battle is over before they get there. In that event, all that remains of the zombie is ashes.

Examination of the zombie's remains reveals a golden ring set with a large ruby. This ring will be found either on the zombie's finger or buried in the ashes, depending on how the zombie died. An *identify* spell will show it be a

Stones' Origin Rumors (Roll 1d8)

1. The stones mark the burial site of an ancient village leader.
2. The stones are an ancient magical marker. They form one marker in a line stretching for dozens of miles. Other markers include ancient bridges, obelisks, and old woodland tracks. These "ley lines" are ancient magical lines of force. The intersection of two ley lines is a place of great power. Sundown is supposed to be one such place.
3. The stones are an astronomical device that told the ancient farmers the start of the seasons. Some of the stones are aligned with very bright stars on equinox nights.
4-7. The stones are the remains of a group of witches who were holding a coven in the field. One of their spells misfired and they were all turned to stone. This belief has given the stones their nickname, the Witches of the Glade.
8. The stones are the handiwork of an eight-legged reptile, possibly a basilisk, that wandered into a farmers' camp centuries ago. The creature's gaze turned the poor farmers to stone as they sat around their campfire.

ring of depetrification (see the sidebar for details).

If the PCs cast a *speak with dead* spell on the zombie's remains, they discover that the corpse was that of the mage Arris. When he was alive, he believed that the witch stones were farmers accidentally turned to stone by a basilisk centuries before. He knows the details of the *ring of depetrification*, including the number of charges remaining. He used the ring on one of the stones in the circle but instead of a farmer appearing, to his surprise he got a strange manlike creature wearing war paint and feathers. This creature screamed and ran toward the woods. Arris tried to chase him, but something large and powerful grabbed him from behind. He couldn't see what it was, but it was big and he could sense its evilness. Then all his strength seemed to fade away. The corpse knows nothing more.

2. The Storage Shed. This is a hutlike building, about 20'×20', with no windows and one small locked wooden door at the front. It is normally used to store small pieces of farming equipment. The body of Arris, the dead mage, has lain here for the past day while awaiting burial.

If their curiosity is aroused by talk of the mysterious death of Arris, the PCs might decide to come here immediately and examine his body. If they do this before the ju-ju zombie runs amok through the town (see "During the Night") they find the zombie trying to break out of the hut. When it hears the PCs approaching, the zombie climbs onto a ledge above the door and waits for them to enter.

The PCs can gain entry in several ways. A successful open-locks roll or knock spell will open the door. Smashing the door down requires a successful open-doors roll and attracts the attention of a passing farmer, who runs for assistance and returns with a second farmer in five rounds.

When the PCs enter the storage shed, read the following to the players:

> The inside of the shed smells of rot and decay. By the thin rays of light that filter through the cracks in the walls and roof, you can see that the room contains nothing but a large coffin. You realize with mounting horror that the coffin lid is askew! A hideous groan fills the small room, and you look above to see a dark, cloaked figure watching you from a ledge over the doorway. Its red eyes seem to meet those of each member of your group just as it leaps!

See "During the Night" for the ju-ju zombie's statistics. For its first attack, the zombie gains a +2 bonus on initiative because of its unexpected leap from the ledge. If the PCs made noise when entering the storage shed (by breaking down the door, for example), two farmers arrive and give aid to the PCs after five rounds. If the PCs were reasonably quiet while entering the shed, it takes seven rounds for the sleepy farmers come to investigate the noise of the ensuing battle.

Farmers (2): AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; zero-level humans; hp 4 (×2); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 9; MC; dagger, club.

If the PCs come to the storage shed at any time other than the first night, they find it empty with the door smashed open from the inside.

Ring of Depetrification

This gold ring set with a large red ruby can cast the equivalent of a *stone to flesh* spell. The ring must be worn and touched to a stone in order to activate the spell. A successful depetrification uses up one charge.

The ring will work only on creatures that have been petrified by magical means, such as a *flesh to stone* spell, gaze of a basilisk, etc. Touching the ring to a normal stone has no effect. The ring holds 15 charges, can be recharged, and is worth 10,000 gp.

In the Morning

As the PCs are finishing breakfast, an old man enters the tavern. He has a face lined with age but bears himself with poise and dignity. He looks around the tavern, sees the PCs, and walks toward their table. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> "I am Gillan, an elder of the village of Sundown. I noted your arrival last night and come to you now with a proposition. You have probably heard of the recent death of our mage, Arris. The . . . disturbance . . . last night has done much to increase tension in our village. Rumors of evil spirits and dark magic abound. The Blessing of the Seeds is only two days away, and people are saying that if the curse isn't lifted by then, the harvest will fail and we will all starve. The farmers are too superstitious and too busy planting seeds to investigate these events."
>
> Gillan regards you with a cold stare for a moment. Then he says, "The village of Sundown can pay you a total of 100 gp if you can rid us of this evil. Can you do it?"

Gillan: AL LG; AC 10; MV 9 (due to age); zero-level human; hp 2; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 6, D 6, Ch 15; ML 12; unarmed.

Gillan is very worried about the problems in the village. The farmers look to him to solve their troubles, but until now he hasn't known what to do. He regards the appearance of the adventurers as a piece of supreme good luck, perhaps the answer to his prayers.

Gillan will tell the PCs all he knows about Arris's death. The body was found near the Witches of the Glade. There were no marks on the body and no signs of injury. However, the body was a strange gray color, and the face was contorted into a rictus of pain. Also, two of the standing stones have vanished (the large central stone and one of the smaller stones from the outer ring). Gillan thinks there is foul magic at work and is beginning to believe some of the stories of evil spirits himself.

The PCs may want to investigate the village to gather more information. The layout of the village is shown on the map, but the DM should feel free to redesign it as he pleases.

3. Farmhouses. All the farmhouses are similar two-story buildings. They are clean and tidy but very functional. The farmers are very busy planting seeds at this time of year. If the PCs talk to any of the farmers about recent events, roll 1d8 and consult the Village Rumors table to determine what the adventurers learn.

4. Arris's Bungalow. This building is similar in appearance to all the other farmhouses, but it is only one story high, containing four rooms and an entrance hall (see the map). Above the front door, a small rune is carved into the wooden frame. The rune is not magical; it is an

ancient symbol meaning "Welcome" that Arris copied from a book and decided to put over his door. A *comprehend languages* spell will discover this. The door is closed but not locked.

Inside, the place is in a mess. Arris was very untidy and was forever losing spell components underneath piles of paper. The PCs can discover a lot here if they look in the right places. The important discoveries and information are detailed below, but the DM can take this opportunity to include other minor magical items, such as scrolls and potions.

4A. Corridor. This 10′×20′ entrance hallway contains four coat hooks set high into the wall. One of Arris's spare robes hangs on the hook closest to the entrance. This robe contains a few worthless spell components (pieces of wood, candle wax, etc.). Hidden in a secret pocket is a *dagger +1.*

4B. Bedroom. The only piece of furniture in Arris's bedroom is a small bed. A large pile of clothes decorates the southwest corner of the floor. This is Arris's laundry, still waiting to be taken to the washerwoman. If the PCs rummage around in the pile, they will discover a forgotten piece of parchment in the pocket of a robe. This scroll contains an *identify* spell.

4C. Washroom. This area contains a small washbasin and lavatory. A minor spell causes the air in here to be fresh and smell like violets; this spell will end in 3d10 days.

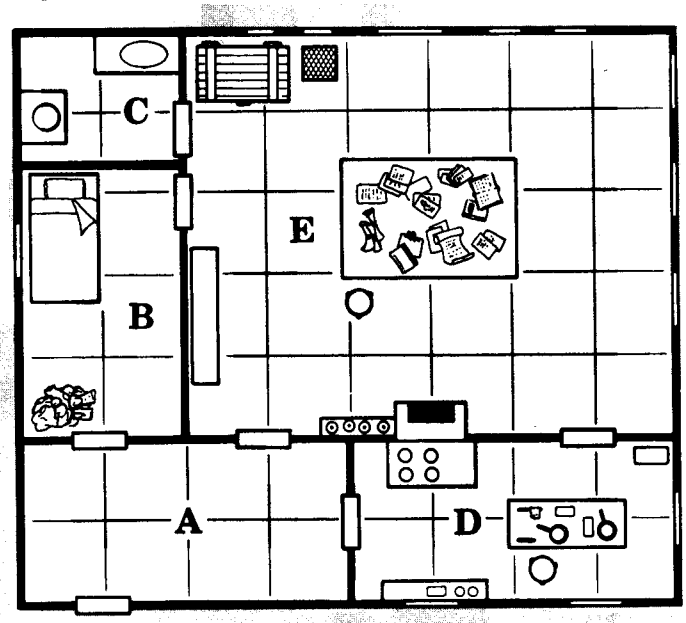
4D. Kitchen. Surprisingly, Arris's kitchen is clean, well equipped, and well organized, in contrast to the rest of the bungalow. It seems the mage was quite a gourmet cook. A wide selection of pots and pans hangs over a small stove. Inside a drawer is a set of silver cutlery worth 5 sp.

4E. Study. The study is a large square room with an empty fireplace against the south wall. Four bottles containing different colored liquids have been carefully placed on a shelf attached to the east wall. These are potions and chemicals that Arris used in his experiments. The first liquid is black and fizzy; it is a potion of *healing.* The second is a pea-green potion of *levitation.* The third is orange-brown and contains concentrated nitric acid. Any PC who sips this liquid sustains 1-6 hp damage to his mouth, plus 1-4 hp damage for the next three rounds unless cured. The PC also finds it difficult to speak until his burns have healed. The fourth bottle holds a clear liquid with a sharp, fruity smell. It contains acetone, a chemical that Arris was using as an all-purpose solvent for mixing potions. Sipping this causes 1d4 –2 hp damage to the PC's mouth. Each bottle is labeled in Arris's own shorthand. Any PC casting a *comprehend languages* spell on the labels can read the contents of each bottle.

A large bookcase has been pushed up against the west wall of the study. It holds 50 books, mostly ancient textbooks on magic and tomes of local history. The DM is invited to invent the names of these books to act as red herrings and confuse the PCs. Examples might be *1,001 Uses for Nail Varnish Remover; Famous Wizards of the Past; Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Basilisks (But Were Afraid to Ask),* etc. One of the books is entitled *Forgotten Languages* and is a very ancient work written in an archaic form of Common. It deals with the meanings of symbols and hieroglyphs from languages used in the

ARRIS'S BUNGALOW
Area 4

1 square = 5′



Village Rumors (Roll 1d8)

1. "Betty Haywagon had a goat stolen last night. She loved that animal like a pet, and she's heartbroken."
2. "My son and his friends saw several large, dark figures moving in the woods. There's talk of evil spirits about!"
3. "There's a stranger in town. He wears a dark cloak and has a very pointed nose. He's been seen hanging around the church. I saw him once on the path and he gave me the creeps!"
4. "The gods are angry with us for performing a pagan ritual to bless the crops. These violent occurrences are an omen. The festival should be abandoned."
5. "That madman, Arris, summoned all sorts of evil monsters for his arcane experiments. One of them must have got loose!"
6. "If the festival isn't held, the crops will fail and we'll all starve!"
7. "A stranger dressed in a dark cloak stopped me on the road into town. He asked what year this was! A very strange question, but then he was a strange person."
8. "There are zombies running loose! Only last night there was a battle with one in the center of the village."

area thousands of years ago. Examination of this book reveals a diagram showing the same sunset symbol chalked into the hillside. Below the symbol are the following lines of text:

This symbol is believed to have represented "Danger" or "Warning" in ancient societies. The sunset is thought to be symbolic of the coming of darkness, and many scholars agree it was used to warn travelers of possible hazards in the vicinity.

In the margin of the text here is written the comment, "Warning of what? Basilisk?" (in Arris's hand).

A later page shows a symbol similar to that above Arris's front door. The inscription reads:

This symbol is believed to be a universally recognized rune of friendship, translating as "Welcome." The ancients often carved this symbol over their doorways as a sign of hospitality to travelers.

A large table covered with piles of books and parchments takes up the center of the room. The books are similar to the ones in the bookcase, and the parchments are notes written by Arris to himself in his own shorthand. One note says "laundry tomorrow." One particularly old book is lying open on the table. It is entitled *Ancient Histories of the Vales* and appears to have been written several hundred years ago. It is written in Common and is open at a chapter about Sundown. The text begins:

Sundown is famous throughout the area for its ring of standing stones. The locals call these the Witches of the Glade after a local legend about a backfired spell turning a coven into stone. More reliable sources, however, say that the stone ring is the result of the passage of a basilisk. The stones are the remains of a group of farmers who were seated around a campfire when the monster petrified them with its magical gaze. No one knows what happened to the basilisk afterward.

This book is the source of Arris's misguided belief in the origin of the stones. He was so obsessed with the basilisk idea that he became blinded to the obvious anomalies that this version of the stones' origin produces. If the PCs have visited the stones already, they might think it strange that the farmers sat in so large a circle. And one of the farmers would have had to stand on top of the campfire to form the central stone. The PCs also might realize that a basilisk's gaze should produce "farmer-shaped" stones, not rectangular blocks. Quick-witted PCs should therefore guess that the book is not quite as reliable as Arris believed it to be.

Also on the table is a receipt from a famous wizard in a nearby city. It reads:

Received from Arris Dreamweaver: 10,000 gp for 1 (one) ring of depetrification, fifteen (15) charges.
Agrimopheles the Spellmaster

If the PCs search for secret compartments, they might find a concealed drawer beneath the table. It is locked, but a successful *open locks* roll, *knock* spell, or brute force (total strength of 16 needed) will open the drawer. Inside are two additional books. One is bound in finest leather and covered with runes and symbols. The other is a smaller book closed with a locked strap.

The leather-bound book is Arris's spell book and the other his diary. The spell book is protected with a *fire trap* spell. Any PC who touches it takes 1d4+4 hp damage to his hands. The spells in the book are left to the DM's choice so as not to unbalance his campaign. Arris was only a 4th-level mage, so the spells should be of an appropriate level. The *fire trap* spell was cast from a scroll that Arris purchased.

The lock on the other book, a diary, is not very strong. If a PC gives the strap a quick tug it will break. If the PCs spend an hour or so reading the diary (it is written in Common), they should learn that Arris was obsessed with the stone circle. He had been doing research on the stones for years, trying to find out their origin. The last page of the diary reads:

I have finally tracked down a book I believe to be trustworthy. From it I have learned that the Sundown stones are probably farmers who were accidentally turned to stone by a basilisk's gaze. If that is so, it is my duty to free them from their imprisonment. Until now, I have been unconvinced by the reports I've read about the stones. But my discovery of the book has finally convinced me to attempt the depetrification. I journey to the city tomorrow to obtain the necessary item . . . .

. . . . Agrimopheles drives a hard bargain! It cost me 10,000 gp—my life savings—for the ring necessary to dispel the evil curse. I will soon attempt to free one of the poor souls trapped in the stones.

This is the last entry in the diary.

In the corner of the study is an unlocked 6′×6′×3′ chest that supports a small cage containing four live rats. The chest is the home of Arris's pet snake, Sammi. It isn't locked because Sammi is a much better deterrent than any lock could be! The rats are Sammi's food supply. If anyone opens the rats' cage, they instantly attack.

Rats, common (4): Int animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 15; HD 1/4; hp 2 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA disease; SZ T; ML 4; XP 7 each; MC. These rats fight to the death. They haven't been fed for at least three days and are mad with hunger.

Opening the chest awakens Sammi the snake from his doze. The tame snake rises up and eagerly comes forward to be petted. He is not hostile but will defend himself if attacked.

Sammi (constrictor snake): Int animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 9; HD 3+2; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1/1-3; SA constriction; SZ M; ML 8; XP 175; MC.

If the snake scores a successful hit with a coiling attack, it causes automatic constricting damage each round thereafter. A PC must make a successful *open doors* roll with a +1 penalty to break free. If the PCs try to pet the snake and do not attack, Sammi will be friendly and might even become a PC's pet (if the DM allows this). The constrictor remains with the PC so long as he is given a constant supply of live rats to eat.

When the PCs have disposed of the snake, either by killing it or by befriending it, they can see that the chest contains dozens of empty linen bags and one full bag. This contains 10 gp, all that remains of Arris's life savings after he purchased the *ring of depetrification*.

5. The Church. Sundown's church is a modest building with room for almost a hundred people. It is very old, dating back centuries. From the outside, its most outstanding feature is a 50′-tall steeple. Above the large oaken doors is an engraved holy symbol proclaiming

that the church is consecrated ground. Inside it is cool and dimly lit. The only light comes from a few stained-glass windows and some candles arranged around the altar. The windows depict holy images and events of centuries past. One window shows a scene of the stone ring. Above the ring is the sunset symbol. Below it is a caption that reads "The stone circle of the village of Kleria, now known as Sundown."

The altar is made of highly polished marble and is dedicated to a god of lawful-good alignment (DM's choice). Twenty candles in gold candlesticks surround the altar and cast a flickering light over the scene.

Behind the altar is a glass display case. Through the glass, the PCs can see a silver chalice on a purple velvet cushion. This is Jaazzpaa's *chalice of plane travel.* An *identify* spell will reveal it as such but cannot say who its previous owner was. (A detailed description of this item is given in the sidebar.) Casting a *detect evil* spell on the chalice gives an ambiguous result. The chalice still retains some of the aura of its evil master, but repeated cleansing with holy water through the centuries has overlaid this taint with holy emanations. The display case is locked and also protected by a *glyph of warding* known only to Father Matthias. Any person opening the case without saying the appropriate word will be *paralyzed* for 1-4 turns.

As the PCs walk around the church, Father Matthias appears and greets them. The priest invites them to worship at the altar and then asks for a small donation to the Church Roof Restoration Fund. The DM should note how much the PCs donate.

If the PCs ask, Father Matthias will tell them all he knows about the chalice. If they've given at least 20 gp to the roof fund, he will remove the goblet from its case and allow them to examine it and cast (nonharmful) spells on it. The priest says that the chalice is the village's most-prized item. It must have lain in the ground for centuries before being found in the fields behind the church. It was given to the church and has been used for the past 300 years to contain the holy water used in the festival of the Blessing of the Seeds. No arguments will persuade Father Matthias to let the chalice leave the church until the day of the festival, since it is the church's only valuable item. If the PCs show that the goblet is magical or *identify* it, Father Matthias will be amazed. He thought it was just an ancient antique chalice!

6. The Woods. The forest extends from the outskirts of the village for dozens of miles. As the PCs enter the cool woodland, the sun's light is dimmed by the canopy of trees. If horses are present, they react as skittishly as they did upon entering the village. The PCs won't be able to escape the feeling that someone is watching them. Jaazzpaa is hiding in these woods, hence the feelings of dread felt by the PCs.

Also, when Jaazzpaa killed the shaman that Arris freed from the stone, another ju-ju zombie was created. This zombie is watching and waiting for the PCs to be off guard. It has climbed a tree and, as the PCs pass underneath, it will drop down onto the last party member, gaining +4 to surprise for this first attack. This ju-ju zombie has similar statistics to the previous one (see "During the Night"), although the PCs may think it is another type of creature since it looks totally different from the zombie that was Arris. It appears to be a humanoid figure dressed in an animal-skin loincloth. Its body is painted with weird circles and designs in multicolored war paint. On its head is a strange headdress of feathers from which dangle small animal bones. From its ears hang earrings made from the teeth of some large carnivorous beast. Its skin is gray and its eyes glow red with hate.

Ju-ju zombie: Int low; AL N(E); AC 6; MV 9; HD 3+12; hp 21; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; SA attack as a 6-HD creature; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; half damage from fire-based attacks and piercing or blunt weapons; unaffected by mind-affecting spells such as *charms* or *holds* as well as poison, *magic missile* and *cold* spells; MR special; ML special; XP 975; MC.

The zombie will fight until destroyed. Examination of the body reveals that it was carrying a knife made from animal bone and a small wooden stick decorated with a few chicken feathers. It also has a pouch containing a few colored beads. None of these items are magical; they are just religious symbols and totems.

If a PC casts a *speak with dead* spell on the body, the corpse will speak in a strange language, an ancient form of Common so old as to be incomprehensible to the PCs. A second spell such as *tongues* will be needed before any information can be learned. If the PCs do not have these spells, they may be able to persuade Father Matthias to use his scrolls for them. The priest might do so if the PCs have worshiped at the altar *and* donated money to the church. The DM should make this decision based on how well the players role-played their encounters with the priest. If the PCs successfully talk to the corpse, they will be able to obtain some useful information:

The corpse was called Vai, and he was a shaman of the village of Kleria thousands of years ago. He was one of the 10 holy men of the villages of the Vale that put aside their differences to combat the foul creature menacing the area.

He refers to this creature as simply the Beast. He does not know what type of creature the Beast is, although he is able to give a vague description (9' tall, half-human, half-vulture, sharp claws, beak, likes to kill people). The Beast would appear out of nowhere in the center of a village, bringing death and suffering.

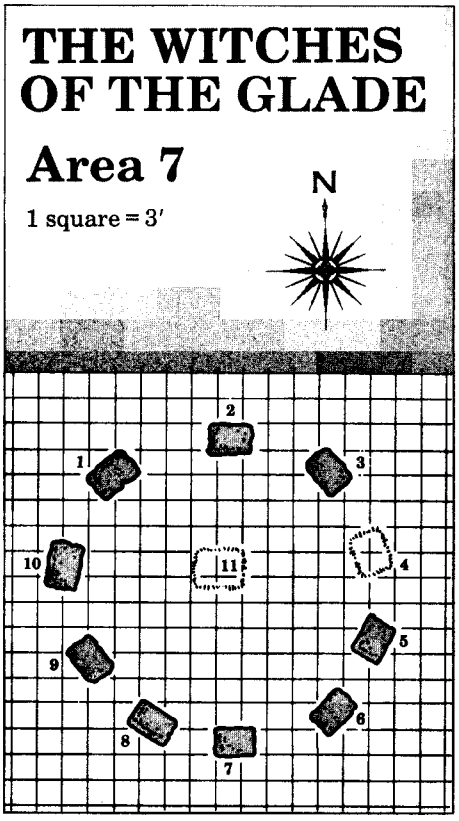
Chalice of Plane Travel

This is a powerful magical item created by beings from the outer planes to allow them easy access to other planes. It belonged to Jaazzpaa for centuries until he lost it when he was imprisoned in the stone ring.

The chalice is a solid silver goblet about 9" high and 6" in diameter. Coiled around the stem is the jewel-encrusted carving of a snake. Five runes inscribed in gold are evenly spaced around the chalice's outer rim. These runes are written in an ancient language known only in the outer planes, although a *comprehend languages* or *legend lore* spell will reveal their meanings. They are the names of the five planes to which travel is possible using the chalice: Prime Material, Astral, Ethereal, Hades, and The Abyss.

To use the chalice, a being must touch his (or its) lips to the destination rune, then raise the goblet in a drinking motion. Each of the five planes has a separate command word, known only to Jaazzpaa. If the correct command word is not spoken after making the drinking motion, the chalice will not function.

The chalice is worth 10,000 gp, although much more could be obtained for it if any of the command words are discovered.



Vai helped to cast the *stonecase* spell, first on the Beast, then on himself and the other shamans to make the prison permanent. He can describe the main effects of the spell (see the spell's sidebar) but cannot remember enough of the exact details to be able to teach a PC how to cast it.

Vai can recall few of the events of the past few days. After a long period of blackness, he suddenly awakened to find himself standing in his place in the ring of stones. A strangely garbed man stood in front of him, a person who seemed to be delighted about something. Vai knew that once the stone ring prison was broken, the Beast would return, so he tried to flee. He ran into the woods and heard a scream from the robed man. Then he felt the evil presence of the Beast rapidly approaching. Then there was only pain. The corpse knows nothing more.

7. The Witches of the Glade. This stone circle is situated in a small field on the outskirts of the village. As the PCs approach the circle the air seems to be charged with static, as though great powers are concentrated here. All their hair stands on end, and their fingers tingle.

There are nine stones in the 40' diameter circle. Originally there were two more stones, one in the ring and one in the center. Now there are only deep depressions in the grass where these two stones once stood. The PCs might deduce that those stones have only recently been moved, since no grass is growing in the depressions. However, there are no marks in the field to suggest how these stones may have been moved. If the PCs look for tracks around the central depression, they will discover a deep, 12"-long footprint. The being who made the print had only three toes, each of which seems to end in a sharp claw.

The remaining stones are all vaguely rectangular and about as tall as a man. Some of the stones are chipped and cracked, covered in yellow or green lichen. A few are badly eroded and pitted from centuries of weathering and abuse from passing armies or adventurers. A detailed description of each stone is given in the Stone Descriptions table. The layout of the stones is shown in the map at left.

A *detect magic* spell reveals that the stones are indeed magical, but of a type of magic never before encountered. An *identify* spell reveals that the stones contain humanoid creatures petrified by an unusual magical enchantment. Spells that alter a stone's shape or appearance, such as *stone shape, passwall, transmute rock to mud,* etc., will work, although the stone gets a saving throw: Roll 1d20. A score greater than the spell-caster's level indicates a successful save, and the stone will be unaffected.

If the PCs have the *ring of depetrification* (or have a *stone to flesh* spell), they may wish to use it on one of the stones. The results of this action will depend on which stone they try to affect. Any depetrified shaman will return in the same general condition as his stone. A badly eroded stone will become a badly "eroded" shaman (most likely dead)! If any stone was successfully altered using a magical spell, such as *stone shape,* the DM should remember that the shaman it contains will be similarly altered when depetrified, probably fatally.

Stones 1, 5 and 10 are badly eroded. If the PCs use the ring on any of these, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> The stone shimmers, then fades away. In its place is a humanoid body lying on the ground. The body is headless and covered in blood. Several parts of the body are contorted into strange shapes. The body appears to be that of a human dressed in a loincloth, with strange painted designs covering his body.

Since stones 2 and 6 are relatively intact, the ring will successfully depetrify these shamans:

Stone Descriptions

All the stones are grayish in color and made of a type of rock local to the area. They are each 6' tall with 3'-square bases (unless otherwise stated).

Stone 1: This stone is only 4' tall and is badly eroded. Parts of it have been chipped away, and the surface is pitted and scarred. The stone may originally have been taller, but the top has been worn away by the weather over the centuries.

Stone 2: This stone is in good condition. There is no lichen or moss growing on it, and it still retains much of its original rectangular shape.

Stone 3: This stone has survived the ravages of the weather very well, except for a deep crack running horizontally about 3' from the ground.

Stone 4: This stone is missing.

Stone 5: Same as Stone 1.

Stone 6: Same as Stone 2.

Stone 7: This seems is in good shape except for a few small cracks. Close examination of the cracks reveals that they are full of lichen and moss.

Stone 8: This stone is only 2' tall. It is very badly weathered, with pits and holes covering its surface.

Stone 9: This stone appears to be free from erosion and cracks but is covered in a thick layer of moss.

Stone 10: Same as Stone 1.

Stone 11: This is the missing central stone.

The stone shimmers, then fades away to be replaced by a humanoid figure. The man is wearing only a loincloth and a headband with colored feathers. His body is daubed in stripes of black and white paint.

The man blinks, then looks around. A look of horror slowly crosses his face, and he glances over his shoulder into the center of the circle. He then lets out a blood-curdling scream and runs toward the woods.

If Stone 3 is depetrified, read the following:

You hear a distant scream that grows louder and nearer. The stone vanishes, to be replaced almost instantly by a human figure. The man stands there for a few seconds, then clutches his stomach, utters a low groan, and collapses to the ground. You rush forward but find he is dead from a deep cut across his abdomen.

Stone 7, although mostly intact on the outside, has a large amount of lichen and moss growing inside it in tiny cracks. If this shaman is depetrified, he will die a horrible death due to the presence of lichen in his internal organs:

The stone shimmers, then alters form to that of a human figure. The man blinks at the daylight and totters slightly. He then screams and drops to his knees, clutching his chest. He writhes on the ground for a few seconds, curls up into a small ball, coughs twice, then lies still.

You rush forward but are too late to save him. Around the man's mouth you can see specks of the moss and lichen that he coughed up.

If the PCs touch the ring to Stone 8, there is an unexpected outcome. This stone is too badly eroded to change back to human form, so the magical energy is expended another way:

The stone seems to glow for a few seconds as though it is having difficulty remembering its original shape. The glow gets brighter and brighter, then the stone explodes in a mass of flying rubble, leaving a blackened hole in the ground.

Any PC within 20′ takes 2-12 hp damage from the explosion.

Stone 9 has lichen growing on the outside only. The shaman inside can be successfully depetrified, but he will die from asphyxiation unless a *cure disease* spell is cast on him within two rounds:

The stone vanishes, to be replaced by a green humanoid figure that looks like a man covered with moss. It screams and runs away from you, pulling at its green skin furiously. The figure tries to scream again but seems to be having difficulty breathing. It staggers a few feet, then sinks slowly to the ground.

If the PCs have removed the moss in some way, such as burning it off, before attempting to depetrify the stone, treat this stone like Stones 2 and 6.

If the PCs use *speak with dead* and *tongues* spells on the remains of any of the dead shamans, they can obtain the same information that Vai gave (see area 6). Dead shamans can be brought back to life with spells such as *raise dead,* although those that died from the effects of lichen infection also must have *cure disease* spells cast on them or die again immediately. *Resurrected* shamans know the same information as Vai.

Any shamans that survive the depetrification ordeal run in panic toward the woods, believing that the Beast will be following them. If the PCs can't outrun them or delay them in some way, such as a *hold person* spell, the shamans disappear into the woods, never to be seen again. However, if the PCs catch one, he turns and fights, believing the PCs to be agents of the Beast.

Shaman: AL CN; AC 10; MV 12; F1/M1 (previous levels lost over time of imprisonment); hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; statistics unremarkable; ML 15; bone knife (1d4–1 hp damage); spell: *shocking grasp.* These are the details for a typical shaman. If more than one shaman is depetrified, the DM can modify the details slightly as required. The shamans were once more powerful than they are now, but their long imprisonment has reduced their powers greatly, as it did for the vrock.

If the PCs must fight a shaman, they may opt to either kill or subdue. If they kill the shaman, examination of the body reveals the same sort of items that Vai carried. A *speak with dead* spell elicits only a sullen silence. The corpse

doesn't feel inclined to chat with the person who revived him from thousands of years of imprisonment only to kill him immediately!

If the PCs successfully subdue or *charm* a shaman (or cast a *raise dead* spell on one), he will regard these warriors as gods! In his time, metal implements such as the PCs' swords hadn't yet been invented. Anyone wearing shiny metal armor will be a truly wondrous being to a shaman. He will drop to his knees in front of the PCs and tug at their clothes, seeming to be worshiping them as if they were gods.

The PCs will need to cast a spell such as *tongues* to understand the shaman's speech. Father Matthias might help them with his scrolls, if they ask, although the same conditions apply as before. If the appropriate spell is cast, the shaman gives the same information as Vai. The newly befriended shaman will follow the PCs everywhere, pointing in awe and wonder at each new thing he sees. If the PCs go back to the village, the shaman will cause quite a stir among the villagers. Some may believe the shaman's depetrification to show yet more evidence of evil magic at work.

8. The Sunset Sign. It will take the PCs several hours to climb up into the hills to investigate the chalk sunset symbol. When they reach the site, they find that the topsoil has been scraped away and chalk sprinkled onto the earth to produce the symbol, which measures about 100′ across. There is nothing magical about it. Casting a *comprehend languages* spell on the symbol reveals it to mean "Warning."

The Blessing of the Seeds

While the PCs have been investigating the strange events in the village, Jaazzpaa has been gaining strength in the woods. He has twice *shape changed* into human form and entered the village to find out where, and more important *when*, he is. The vrock has discovered that his *chalice of plane travel* is in the church. He badly wants to return to the Abyss but cannot enter consecrated ground to get the chalice. He *charmed* a passing farm boy to steal it for him. When the boy failed to return, Jaazzpaa decided his best opportunity to get the chalice would be at the festival. He stole a goat to eat, realizing that to make off with a human might initiate a full-scale search of the woods before he was fully ready to deal with it. After some thought, Jaazzpaa decided that on the festival morning, he will find another small child who has wandered away from the village, eat the child, then assume the child's shape and join the festival crowd. This would attract no unwanted attention and would give him the time he needed.

A few hours after the PCs have investigated the church, a messenger comes to tell them that Father Matthias has caught a 10-year-old farm boy trying to steal the chalice. The priest would like them to help in the interrogation of the boy. If the PCs return to the church, they find a very frightened boy who will answer any question without hesitation. A *detect charm* spell gets a positive result.

The boy says he was walking near the woods when he met a man dressed in a black cloak. The man seemed normal enough but did have a very pointed nose. The stranger was very friendly, and he asked if the boy would mind doing him a small favor. Could the boy sneak into the church and borrow the chalice so that the man could examine it? The boy couldn't see any harm in that; after all, the man was his friend!

Farm boy: AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; zero-level human; hp 1; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; statistics unremarkable; ML 7; unarmed.

The PCs may now believe that the chalice is a vital part of the mystery. If they try to persuade Father Matthias to leave the chalice safely in the church during the festival, he will refuse. The chalice is an integral part of the ritual, and the ceremony wouldn't be the same without it! If the PCs send a well-armed search party into the woods looking for the Beast or the stranger, they find nothing. Jaazzpaa has lots of foliage in which to hide, and he always stays out of the way.

On the day of the festival, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> The day dawns bright and cloudless. It seems that the whole town has turned out for the festival. The villagers—men, women, and children—form a line behind Father Matthias, who slowly leads them all to the newly planted fields. They chant a religious prayer, and their combined voices echo through the village. The priest is holding the chalice closely in his arms. Beside him, two villagers are carrying bottles of holy water.

The PCs can join in the procession at any point. The figure in black with the pointed nose is not there. Jaazzpaa has already joined the crowd in his new shape as a local child and is awaiting his chance to grab the chalice; however, the child he tried to catch ran away from him into the woods and escaped, much to the vrock's annoyance. He will be noticed on a 25% chance if anyone is using *detect evil* or a similar spell or power to scan the crowd. If any PCs are guarding or exploring the woods, the DM may allow them to find the lost child (a zero-level NPC with the same statistics as the farm boy) who will tell them about a "bad monster bird." This event should not interrupt the following events at the festival, but the DM may time them to be almost simultaneous for dramatic effect.

> The procession winds out into the fields, then halts by one of the furrows. Father Matthias holds out the chalice while one of the helpers pours holy water into it. The cleric intones, "May the gods grant their humble servants a good harvest this year. May they keep the seeds from disease and blight, and let them grow tall and strong."
>
> The people respond in unison, "Let it be so!"
>
> Father Matthias tilts the chalice, and the holy water pours onto the soil.
>
> As soon as the last drop leaves the chalice, one of the children steps forward and says in a deep, gruff voice, "Give me my chalice, preacher!" As the child reaches out, he begins to grow! His form alters and turns black; his nose elongates and becomes beaklike; and his hands extend into vicious claws. The true form of the Beast—9′ tall, half-human and half-vulture—is revealed to the horrified crowd. People scream and run; some faint. The priest stands frozen with fear.

If the PCs aren't within 20′ of the priest, they cannot prevent the vrock from snatching the chalice from Matthias's hands. Jaazzpaa utters a triumphant roar and begins the casting of his

teleport spell. Just before disappearing into the Abyss at the end of the following round, he ominously declares, "I will return!" If this occurs, the PCs have failed. The creature will make good his threat and return periodically to eat a few villagers and destroy a house or two. The PCs will not be welcome in Sundown if they fail prevent this horror.

However, if the PCs have positioned themselves to protect Father Matthias, Jaazzpaa must fight them to obtain the chalice. Several NPCs might help the PCs in this battle. The NPCs' chances of running away or fighting should be determined by how the PCs have behaved so far in the adventure:

Father Matthias has a base 50% chance to run. If the PCs prayed at his church, modify this chance by –20%. If they gave money to the church roof fund, modify his chance by –1% for each gold piece donated. The DM should then roll percentile dice to determine whether the priest stays or runs.

Geddi, the landlord of the tavern, also has a base 50% chance to run. If the PCs successfully *identified* his sickle, subtract an additional 20%. If Geddi knows that his *sickle* is magical, he will have brought it along to show off to the villagers. He will use it as a weapon if the dice roll determines that he stays.

Two farmers have a base 50% chance each to run away. If the PCs helped the farmers to defeat Arris's ju-ju zombie outside the tavern in the storage shed (area 2), the farmers' percentages are modified by –20% each. Roll separately for each farmer. The farmers' details are the same as those listed at area 2.

If the PCs have any friendly shamans with them, each ancient magic-user has a base 25% chance to run away. Roll separately for each shaman. Their details are given in area 7.

All the other villagers will run away. The DM can modify the percentages of the NPCs up or down as necessary to allow for variations in the strength of the PC party. A single PC might need the help of all the NPCs, but a stronger party might not require any. Also, the DM should alter the base chances of running depending on how well the players role-played previous encounters. For example, if they were rude to Geddi or discourteous to Father Matthias, these NPCs won't feel so inclined to help. The DM should note that most of the NPCs are weak. They probably won't do much damage to the vrock during the battle, but they can provide valuable extra targets for Jaazzpaa to attack, thus taking some of the heat off the PCs.

The Vrock's Tactics

Jaazzpaa will always attack the person holding the chalice. His aim is to get the chalice by whatever means and then go back to the Abyss. If he ever hits the person holding the chalice with 6 more than the needed to-hit score, the chalice is knocked from that person's grasp. Jaazzpaa pounces on the chalice in the next round unless a PC or NPC beats his initiative. If the vrock succeeds in reclaiming the chalice, he immediately begins casting his *teleport* spell and disappears into the Abyss at the end of the following round with the same threat as before.

During the battle, Jaazzpaa tears with his claws and beak, attacking several targets at once. He might cast a *darkness 5' radius* spell on one of his opponents, although never on the person holding the chalice. He uses his *telekinesis* ability to knock over a PC, disrupt a spell, or remove a PC's sword. The victim must make a dexterity roll on 1d20

to avoid being knocked over, or a strength roll to avoid losing a weapon. If he fails to save, the victim must spend the next round either getting back to his feet or retrieving his weapon. Spellcasters are particularly vulnerable to Jaazzpaa's *telekinesis* ability, since any spell is automatically disrupted if the caster is disturbed during the casting time. Occasionally Jaazzpaa will *teleport* a few feet to obtain a surprise attack from an unexpected direction (add +2 to his initiative roll for the next round).

The battle should be a difficult one for the PCs, and there is a strong possibility that some of the NPCs helping the PCs may die. After the relatively easy time they've had until now, the PCs should be made to sweat a bit!

Jaazzpaa will not flee if he is losing. After all, a defeat on this plane will just send him straight back to the Abyss. He has only to wait a century before he can find another way to return. He would much rather have the chalice now, however, so he can begin causing havoc immediately, but a century isn't so long to wait.

If the PCs succeed in destroying Jaazzpaa, he howls in anger. His body glows red for a second before it is enveloped in a sheet of flame and vaporizes before the PCs' eyes, leaving only a small burned patch on the ground.

Concluding the Adventure

The villagers slink back one by one and cheer as the news spreads. The child whose shape Jaazzpaa took is found and brought back to the village. Gillan walks forward and tells the PCs that the village is in their debt. He honors the bargain he made and hands over the reward money as promised. The DM might hint that another donation to the church fund would be a noble gesture now that the adventurers are "rich."

But the PCs may finish this adventure with more than just the reward money. If one of the PCs has befriended Sammi the snake, he will have to see to the snake's comfort and find live rats for it to eat wherever the party goes. The snake will not eat iron rations.

Wherever the PCs go, they may have several depetrified shamans following behind and worshiping their every move! The DM can develop these characters further. Alternatively, Father Matthias could take the shamans into his custody to teach them about the modern world.

The PCs can return to Arris's house and look up information on the Beast in one of his books (*Denizens of the Outer Planes*). They can discover much about this type of creature and realize that, in a century, it probably will return for vengeance. Should they warn the villagers?

The PCs may also hear of a village nearby that has a huge chalk symbol of a horse on its hillside. Arris's book about runes and hieroglyphs says that the horse symbol often meant "gateway." The DM can decide if this is true, what sort of gateway might be there, and where the gateway leads.

The villagers of Sundown may tell the PCs about another stone ring located several miles away. This one is known as Grand Henge and is made up of 50 stones, all 30′ tall! Is Grand Henge a magical prison, too? If so, what sort of creature needs a cage that big? Ω

The Beast

Jaazzpaa (ancient vrock): Int low; AL CE; AC 0; MV 12, fly 18; HD 8+8; hp 48; THAC0 11; #AT 5; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8/1-8/1-6; SA spells; SD half damage from cold, electricity, fire, and gas; MR 50%; ML 19; XP 9,000; spells (can be cast at will, one per round): *charm person, darkness 5′ radius, detect invisible objects, infravision, telekinesis* (200 lbs.), *teleportation* (no error); can cast *energy drain* and *shape change* three times each per day, taking two rounds each to cast; MM1/18.

Jaazzpaa is an example of a type of vrock seldom seen nowadays, even in the outer planes. The race of ancient vrocks was almost wiped out 2,000 years ago (while Jaazzpaa was imprisoned in his rock) when one of their leaders had an unfortunate disagreement with a powerful ruler of the Abyss. The ancient race of vrocks was quickly superseded by the race of common vrocks, which was less likely to step out of line.

Ancient vrocks were slightly more powerful than their common kin and possessed two ninth-level spells each. These spells take Jaazzpaa two rounds to cast because of his limited intelligence, so they are almost never used in direct combat unless the foe is helpless. The *energy drain* spell is Jaazzpaa's particular favorite, since he delights in the creation of a ju-ju zombie that will cause further havoc. The *shape change* spell is similar to the ninth-level wizard spell of the same name in all but casting time, components required (none), and duration (one hour).

Jaazzpaa can be struck by normal missiles and weapons. He can understand any language thanks to his limited *telepathy*.

Not being very bright, Jaazzpaa does not plan any strategy that is especially devious; he rarely thinks ahead. Jaazzpaa is a particularly vicious vrock, even more so since he has been imprisoned for so long. He can think of no better way to spend an afternoon than to torture a human before eating him! He has not seen metal weapons before and so will be surprised at their effectiveness on him. If allowed to remain on the Prime Material plane he will cause havoc, devastating village after village until he's finally dispatched to the Abyss. Once there, he quickly finds that he is one of the most powerful vrocks in the outer planes. Jaazzpaa rapidly accumulates followers from the common vrocks, so that in a century he can return for his revenge in style—unless other PCs destroy him first!

HELLFIRE HOSTAGES

BY ALLEN VARNEY

Every hero's nightmare: the ultimate terrorists

Artwork by John Statema

Allen Varney has published modules for the D&D® and AD&D® games and the AD&D SPELLJAMMER™ campaign set, and game books for TSR's book division. He designed the GAMMA-RAUDERS™ board game, and he's currently working on a trilogy of adventures for the new D&D HOLLOW WORLD™ campaign set. He returns to the MARVEL UNIVERSE™ with an adventure based on his Deluxe City campaign set.

Terrorists have taken over the Hellfire Club, "bastion of the wealthy imperialists." The Hellfire Club's Inner Circle members dare not reveal their mutant powers by defeating the terrorists, so they defer to the police. But the terrorists look immensely powerful themselves, so the police call in the super heroes!

This MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ adventure works best for a Judge and 2-4 relatively low-powered but experienced heroes. You need the Advanced Rules to play. The *Deluxe City* campaign set and several volumes of the *Gamer's Handbook to the Marvel Universe* series should prove helpful but not necessary.

The Club

An old and prestigious upper-class club, the Hellfire Club stands at 410 Fifth Avenue, between 66th and 67th Streets, in New York City—just a few blocks from Avengers Mansion.

The club figures prominently in the social life of the wealthiest class of New Yorkers. Politicians, financiers, and industrial moguls visit for drinks and relaxation in the afternoon. In the evening, the Hellfire Club's frequent (and frequently bacchanalian) parties draw Manhattan's elite.

But the club has another, hidden, purpose: Its leaders want to take over the world. As shown in many issues of the various *X-Men* titles, the club's mutant leaders are engaged in a conspiracy of wealth, influence, and super powers. Along the way they've made many enemies—including, it appears, a terrorist group.

Maps: For an exterior map, use the west map of midtown Manhattan in the *Deluxe City* campaign set; assume the Hellfire Club is the square building on Fifth Avenue between 48th and 49th Streets, just north of Charles Scribners' Sons bookstore.

If you don't have the *Deluxe City* set,

locate the Hellfire Club on the Advanced Set's map at the Armstrong Hotel, at the corner of Johnson Street and 8th Avenue.

An interior map of the Hellfire Club is provided with this adventure. The following description is drawn from the "Hellfire Club" entry in the *Deluxe City* campaign set.

Inside and Out

Complete layouts of Hellfire Club Mansion have not yet been revealed. This information and the accompanying map are based on published accounts and are not official. Later accounts may invalidate parts of this description.

Exterior: "Mansion," with its connotations of grandeur and display, seems an inappropriate term for the Hellfire Club's headquarters—at least as seen from the street.

The brick building (Good-strength walls) occupies the entire block, but it is inconspicuous. Designed in New York elite style, the building is only 30′ (two areas) tall. Its entrance is set off from the street by a short, simple flight of concrete steps. Beside the white wooden door (of oak, Typical strength) is a small bronze plaque reading HELLFIRE CLUB—ESTABLISHED MDCCLXIII.

A small steel hatch on the roof leads to the closet of a private bedroom on the second floor. The hatch and its lock are of Good strength.

Entryway: The street entrance is locked by an ordinary lock of Typical strength. This is because the Hellfire Club admits only members and their guests. Inside is a small foyer and cloakroom. (Such Typical strengths are true of the entire building. Nothing about the mansion's construction betrays that it is anything but an ordinary social club.)

Interior: The interior decor is 18th-century Colonial, matching the senior members' eccentric predilection for dressing in 18th-century garb during meetings. Walnut panelling, chandeliers and candelabra of cut glass, gaslight globes in wall sconces—all project an air of not-at-all understated elegance.

The mansion's simple floor plan gives pride of place to the great central ballroom, a spacious carpeted room over 120′ (one area) long and 40′ wide. The ceiling is 29′ (two vertical areas) high, reaching the roof of the building. There is nothing between the ceiling and the roof but electrical wiring.

Many elaborate doorways lead to the ballroom. The dominant feature of the room is a palatial fireplace, where a great fire blazes cheerily every evening during winter months. The fireplace stands to the right as one enters through the foyer from the main entrance on Fifth Avenue.

Rooms and chambers: A hallway surrounds the ballroom on both floors of the building. On the upper floor, the hall opens onto a sturdy wooden balcony (Good strength) overlooking the ballroom. Public rooms and private chambers are arranged along the outer sides of the hallways on both floors.

Public rooms are all on the ground floor. These include a large smoking room, an extensive library (with a large selection of books that earlier centuries deemed "indecent"), and a dining room that seats 64. Next to the dining room is a large and well-equipped kitchen.

Two staircases and an elevator give access to the second floor. Members always refer to the 18 small cubicles on the upper floor as "chambers." The semantic difference between "chambers" and "rooms" is that rooms are public but chambers are for private matters—business, gambling, or romance. Most chambers measure 15′×10′; truly high rollers reserve one of the two 15′×15′ chambers. Each chamber has one round table, one chair, and a wide padded divan. Chambers are soundproofed with Good material and locked with Good locks.

At the rear of the second floor, above the kitchen, a brave searcher finds the private rooms of the Inner Circle. Two fully furnished bedrooms await the rare times when leaders celebrate heavily and are unwilling or unable to drive home. In the closet ceiling of one bedroom, a locked hatch leads to the roof.

Between the bedrooms stands an elegant meeting room, where the Inner Circle once held the X-Men captive.

Basement: This concrete-walled (Excellent strength) storage area, accessible only from the kitchen on the first floor, is filled with crates of kitchen and party supplies. A locked and guarded basement room holds a small armory for the Inner Circle's mercenaries. Mercenaries have no barracks, lockers, or lounge areas on the premises, but they often hang around the kitchen.

There was once another entrance to the basement—from below through the sewers. The hero Wolverine used this to break into the mansion and rescue his fellow X-Men. The basement floor had an iron grate of Excellent strength, locked with a Remarkable-strength lock. The round grate led to a concrete access tunnel and down to the sewers. The Inner Circle used this entrance to smuggle in mercenaries and firearms. But since Wolverine's invasion, the tunnel has been filled in with concrete.

The Set-Up

Campaigns outside New York: If the campaign takes place outside New York City, the heroes could be visiting New York in their public or secret identities. The Hellfire Club may also have opened a branch club in the heroes' city, though this makes a long-term impact on the campaign.

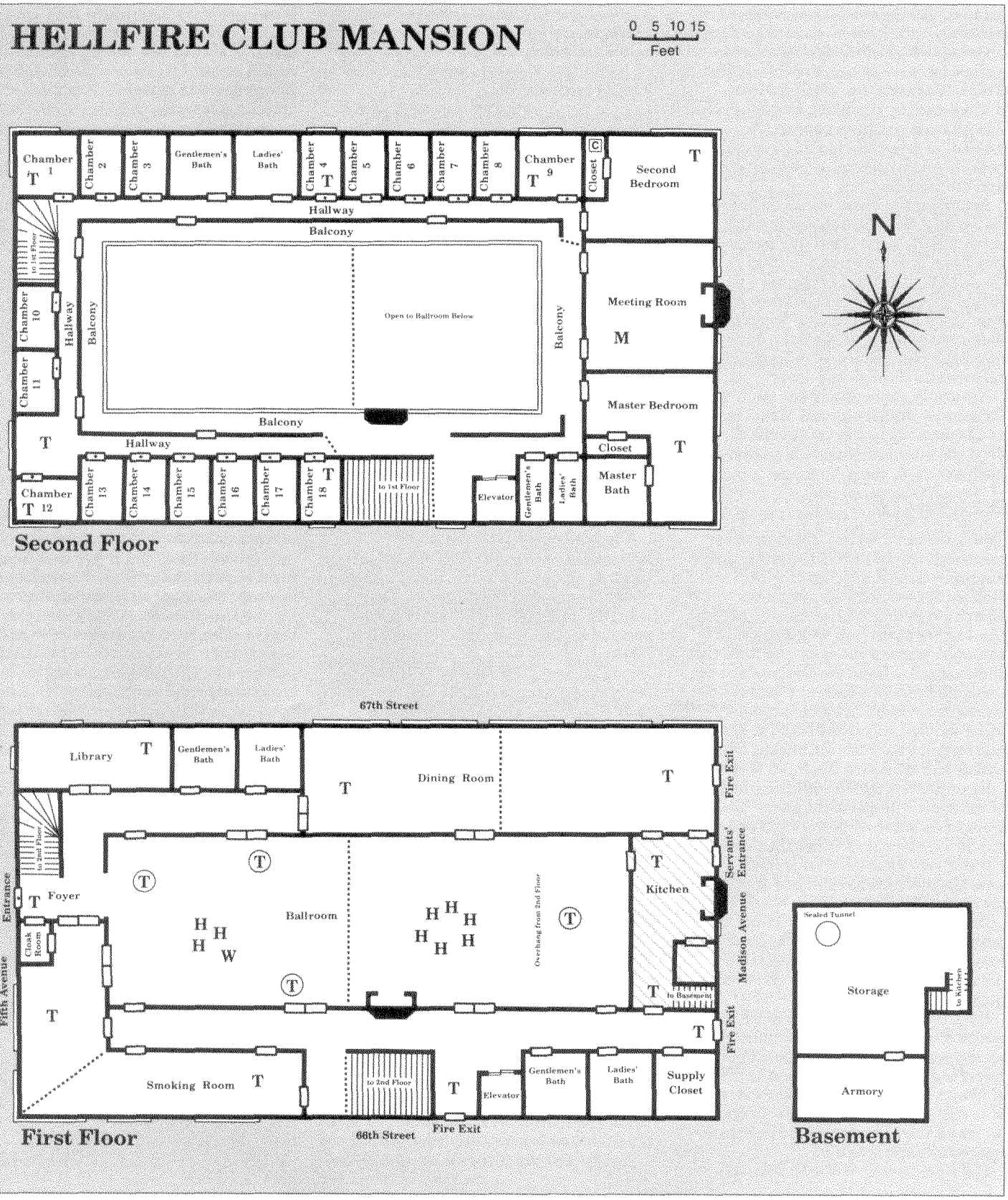
Getting the heroes involved: If the PCs maintain official connections with the police, they get the request for aid through their usual channels. Otherwise, the heroes hear about the takeover through a radio or TV bulletin: "Early reports tell of a terrorist takeover at the prestigious Hellfire Club. Gunshots have been heard—no, correction—energy blasts have been heard inside. Police are on the scene."

If the heroes are not in range of a radio or television, a friend who belongs to the club could manage to phone a frantic message to the heroes' headquarters: "I'm at the Hellfire Club. A bunch of crazies have taken over, and they've got weird weapons! If you don't do something, they'll—no! Keep away! Aaaahhhh!"

At the scene: As the heroes arrive, police are cordoning three blocks of Fifth Avenue in front of the club. Publisher and club member J. Jonah Jameson stands behind the police lines, fuming at the attack and blaming it on those "super-powered demagogue nuisances who attract this violence."

Police lieutenant Michael Mandelsman can tell the heroes what little the NYPD knows. A few minutes ago, someone phoned 911 and reported screams, shouts, and "sounds like ray-guns" inside the club. Someone inside with a megaphone is claiming to be with the "United Front for Wakandan Liberation" and is holding several dozen hostages, many of them wealthy and influential. The terrorists have threatened to kill the hostages if anyone

HELLFIRE CLUB MANSION



attacks, but they have not yet issued demands.

Heroes with knowledge of terrorist groups have never heard of this United Front. Wakanda, the small African nation ruled by the Black Panther, suffers no known political unrest. No amount of investigation uncovers any notable connection between Wakanda and the Hellfire Club.

Entering the club: Terrorist guards watch all doors and upper-story windows, but given its relatively light construction, breaking into the Hellfire Club is not difficult. Likely entry points include the ballroom and kitchen chimneys (each 2′ wide and two stories tall), basement windows (not shown on the map), the roof hatch and, of course, frontal assaults through the doors.

Naturally, any hostage situation calls for caution. As Lieutenant Mandelsman can make clear, a frontal assault would alert the guards and probably doom the hostages.

Inside the Club

There are 24 terrorists. The four main terrorists, the leaders of the group, are guarding 50 hostage club members and staffers in the ballroom, including Emma Frost (the White Queen) and, at the Judge's discretion, other rulers of the club's mutant Inner Circle. Base the choice of other Inner Circle members on the Hellfire Club's current roster as shown in the comics; on individual villains' personal rivalries with PC heroes; and on game balance, should the PCs end up in battle with the Inner Circle.

Regardless of whom you choose, none of the super villains of the Inner Circle want to reveal their powers in front of the normal hostages. Since the terrorists haven't yet threatened their lives directly, the villains are content to wait for rescue.

Emma Frost can use many of her telepathic powers invisibly. Though the heroes cannot know it, she has tried mental attacks against the terrorists guarding her—to no effect!

Each terrorist's position is marked with a T on the Hellfire Club map. Main terrorists are circled T's; subordinate terrorists have no circles. Small groups of four to six hostages are indicated with H's. The White Queen is shown with a W. As for the M in the second floor meeting room—keep reading.

Statistics for the White Queen, the main and subordinate terrorists, and the hostages appear in the Non-Player Characters sidebar.

The Terrorists' Plan

Here is an approximate time line of events:

As the heroes arrive: A terrorist leader leans out the upper-story window in the east wall and fires a strange-looking gun at a police helicopter. The gun's blood-red beam barely misses the chopper. "Back away or there's trouble!" the terrorist shouts. Heroes can't identify the weapon's make or model.

At the Judge's option, a police sharpshooter on a roof opposite the club fires at the terrorist. The bullet misses him, chipping the stone of the building. The terrorist withdraws as though he never noticed the bullet. The sharpshooter swears he had the terrorist right in his sights. Heroes who examine the angle of the bullet hole in the wall can deduce there was no way the shot could have missed the terrorist.

A few minutes later, or as the heroes enter the club: An unseen terrorist at an upper window, using a megaphone, announces the demands. They want $10,000,000 and an Army transport helicopter, to be flown in from the National Guard base at Governors Island in New York Harbor. The helicopter is to carry the terrorists and hostages to JFK Airport, where the terrorists want to board an empty but completely fueled 727, with minimal crew, and take off.

"It all happens in one hour," the terrorist says, "or we start bringing down the revenge of the oppressed classes." And he adds, "We'll also deliver some interesting news about the Hellfire Club's leadership."

Though Lieutenant Mandelsman advises against it, the heroes can make ranged attacks against the terrorist. These attacks miss just as the sharpshooter's bullet did, though the heroes may not be certain whether they should have hit. The terrorist, paying no attention, withdraws.

Minutes later, or as heroes in the club prepare to enact their plan: One of the hostages, a retired bank executive named Herbert Altick, makes a foolish try at overpowering a terrorist. He launches himself at the man but misses his target and plummets to the floor.

Belatedly, the terrorist notices the attack and threatens the older man. Altick gasps, "My heart—" and writhes in agony. He is indeed having a heart attack, as his wife, Winona, screams. If he doesn't receive expert medical help within a few minutes, he'll die.

The main terrorists seem to freeze for a moment. Then one turns to Emma Frost and says, "Well? Isn't there something one of you mu— . . . people can do?" The heroes may note that the terrorist stops just short of saying "mutant." Frost coolly replies that she's no doctor, nor is anyone else here. (Frost knows emergency CPR techniques but has no interest in saving Altick. The other members don't know CPR; most of them leave such messy details to their servants.)

If the heroes take no action to stop the terrorists or rescue the hostages, the scenario proceeds as follows:

Two minutes later: One of the main terrorists orders two subordinates to carry Herbert Altick outside and leave him on the front porch. The main terrorist announces Altick's heart attack via megaphone, then allows police or heroes to carry Altick to an ambulance. The terrorist offers no explanation why, having threatened to kill all the hostages before, he is suddenly concerned with a single heart-attack victim. (Altick will survive without permanent harm once transported to a hospital.)

Attacks on the main terrorists prove ineffective. All attacks seem to miss, or the terrorists evade them using the surprising powers described later. But heroes can attack or ambush the subordinates.

An hour later: A main terrorist announces via megaphone, "We have surprising information regarding the true nature of the Hellfire Club's Inner Circle. They are not what they appear to be. In fact, they're all—" Suddenly, from inside, the hostages scream! The terrorist at the window freezes, then vanishes into thin air!

Emma Frost has used her mental bolts to knock out every hostage in the Hellfire Club—well within her four-area range. This guarantees there will be no witnesses as she (and other Inner Circle members, if present) attacks the terrorists. She does not get far before their blasts knock her out, but other club leaders may well defeat all the subordinate terrorists.

Non-Player Characters

This abbreviated list of Mastermind's Powers comes from MU3 *Gamer's Handbook of the Marvel Universe.*

MASTERMIND

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Gd	Ty	Ty	Rm	Ex	Ex	Un

Health: 52 Karma: 140
Resources: Gd Popularity: –10

KNOWN POWERS:

Illusion Generation: Unearthly level. Damage, though imaginary, is removed from Health; zero Health results in unconsciousness for 1-10 rounds. A Psyche FEAT vs. Unearthly intensity is required to avoid harm. Mastermind can become invisible with this power.

Mindtap Mechanism: Unless the Judge decides otherwise, Mastermind does not use this device in this adventure.

Statistics for the White Queen and other Hellfire Club rulers appear in the various volumes of the *Gamer's Handbook of the Marvel Universe.* Here is an abbreviated listing for the White Queen:

EMMA FROST, the White Queen
Hellfire Club Inner Circle member

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Gd	Gd	Ty	Am	Rm	In	Mn

Health: 76 Karma: 145
Resources: In Popularity: 15

KNOWN POWERS:

Telepathy: Monstrous. Psionic force-bolts of Monstrous strength (range 4 areas) that ignore body armor.

Psi Screen: Amazing vs. mental attacks.

Psionic Rapport: Amazing strength (range 50 miles) lets the White Queen know what a willing target experiences.

Psionic Control: Blocks others' psionic powers (including Illusion Generation) on yellow Psyche FEAT (no range). Victim must make a FEAT roll vs. Monstrous intensity to resist.

Sedation: Keeps unconscious victim from waking up unless victim makes a FEAT roll vs. Monstrous intensity (allowed once every 15 minutes).

TALENTS:
Electronics Skill; +1CS to Reason in administration, business, and education.

Subordinate Terrorists

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Gd	Ty	Gd	Ty	Ty	Ty	Ty

Health: 32 Karma: 18

These 20 goons, all with extensive criminal records, are conventional Enforcers from page 63 of the Advanced Set *Judge's Book.* Mastermind, via the illusory main terrorists, has paid them with (real) iron strongboxes filled with (fake) gold. The goons know a lot about the four main terrorists, their plans, and their itinerary—but all their information is wrong. Improvise misleading details as necessary. ("Yeah, Mr. Hero, I heard them myself. They wanna blow up the Brooklyn Bridge! They got a nuclear bomb!")

Main Terrorists

Early in the adventure:

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Ex	Gd	Gd	Ty	Ty	Ty	Gd

Health: 46 Karma: 22
Their futuristic weapons do (illusory) Incredible damage.

Later in the adventure:

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
In	Rm	Rm	In	Ex	In	Ty

Health: 140 Karma: 66

KNOWN POWERS:
Choose powers from the table on pages 8-9 of the Advanced Set *Players' Book* or just assume that the main terrorists appear to have *all* the powers listed there at Monstrous rank. Their weapons, too, do (illusory) Monstrous damage.

Generic Hostages

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Pr	Ty	Ty	Ty	Gd	Gd	Ty

Health: 22 Karma: 26
Resources: Ex-Rm Popularity: 5-10

TALENTS:
Most normal Hellfire Club members have Business/Finance Talent or other professional skill, perhaps Heir to Fortune, and one or two Trivia Talents.

The following are a few specific hostages that the heroes may encounter:

Herbert and Winona Altick
Retirees

"Hiii, we're the Aaal-ticks!" They're both in their early 60s, big-time socialites richly dressed. The Alticks are versed in etiquette but tend to be overbearing—prone to finish other people's sentences, namedrop, and voice opinions for all to hear. They can appear quite likable, from a distance. Herbert was a bank executive until heart problems forced him to retire. Now he lobbies for the NRA when he is not hunting or fishing. Winona is active in the DAR, the PTA, and the Senior Citizens' Art Appreciation League.

Elmer and Mary Norwood
Columbia University professors

He's tall, thin, bearded, bespectacled, graying, a bit sloppy in his dress. He teaches Political Science. She's shorter, bespectacled, and still trim. She teaches Anthropology. It's hard to tell their ages, but it's likely they're in their early 50s. These two are polite, witty, and interested in everything. Both are endearing academic types who frequently get into political arguments with conservative Hellfire Clubbers.

Venceslaus ("Sven") Lagting
Danish/Faeroese fish merchant

A tall, stout man in his mid 50s, Sven is blond and balding, with a thick mustache and ruddy cheeks. He always dresses well and is pleasant to look at. His heavy accent can be difficult to decipher, but he's friendly—if you don't mind hearing more about fish than anyone could want to hear. This wealthy merchant made his fortune in the Faeroe Islands (in the North Atlantic, governed by Denmark) as a fish exporter. Then he emigrated to America. Now he is the principal stockholder in a firm that controls 18% of all the dried cod imported to the Western hemisphere.

Other Hostages

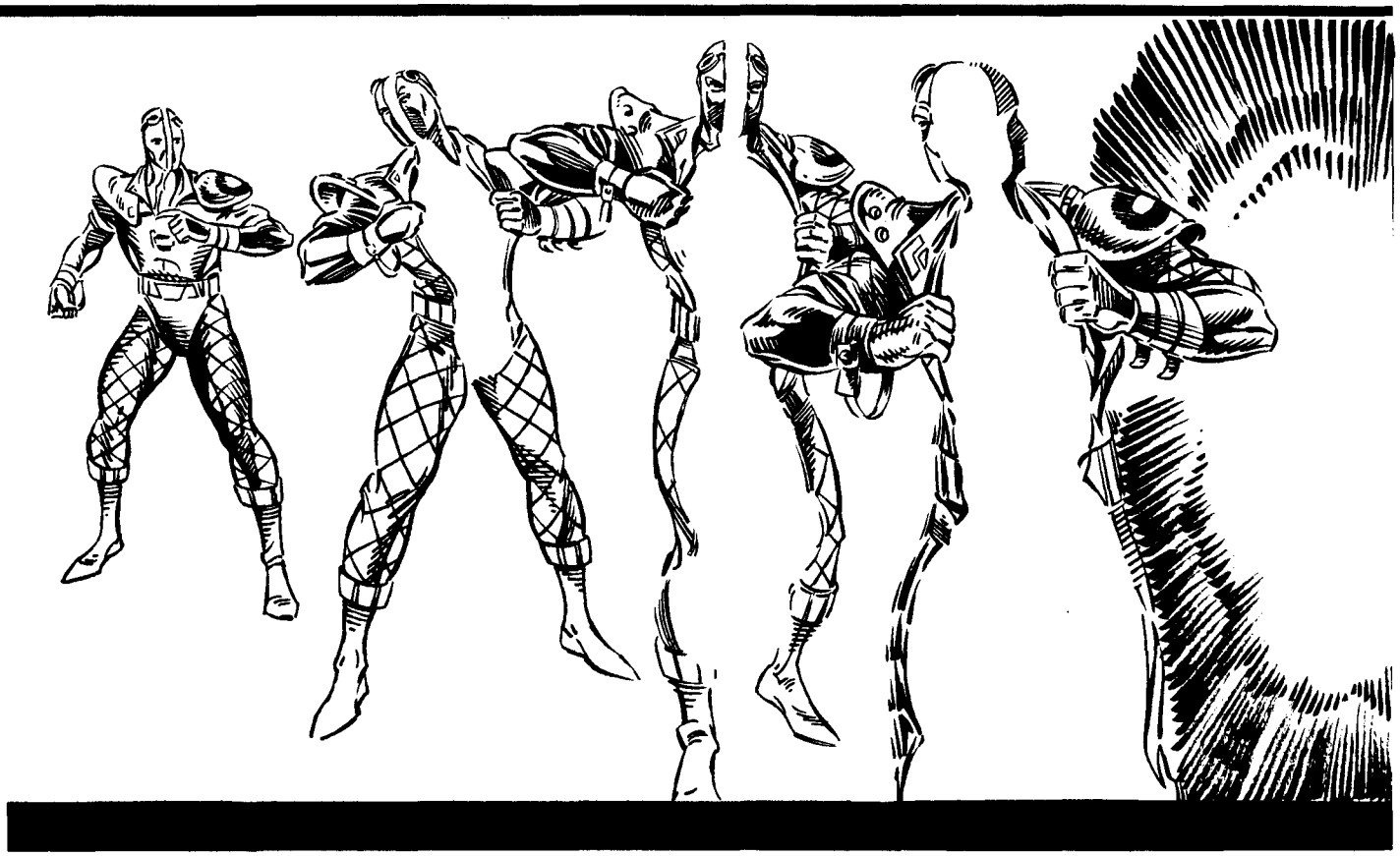
Carl and Matilda Wentworth, retirees (the grandparently sort, much interested in doll collecting);

Isaac Dickinson, how-to writer (credits include *How to Grout Your Bathroom Tile* and *You Can Build a Redwood Sun Deck);*

Gwen and Gary Garson, yuppies who made a killing in the market and got out before the crash (they talk about tennis a lot); and

Tom Bremmer, portly yacht club type (former lawyer who retired early for health reasons).

Page 63 of the *Judge's Book* offers statistics for policemen and SWAT team operatives.



At this point the heroes might show up from outside (or from unconsciousness), just in time to witness the Inner Circle members' displays of mutant power as they attack their captors. In the middle of the fight, however, the main terrorists vanish, leaving the Inner Circle bewildered. The mutants have enough presence of mind, however, to bargain with, threaten, or try to kill any witnesses to their true powers.

When the police break in moments later, conscious Inner Circle members all feign unconsciousness. When roused, they say the terrorists started shooting everyone with stun bolts. The subordinate terrorists are lying around like rag dolls, but no one can find any trace of the main terrorists, now or ever. Mysterious!

However, the mystery only persists if heroes have remained outside and haven't tried to rescue the hostages. And what kind of heroes would they be then?

Fighting the Terrorists

Funny—not many of the terrorists look Wakandan. In fact, they vary widely in color, size, accent, and so on. Real equal-opportunity terrorism.

There are actually two different types of terrorists, identified by their slightly different uniforms.

The four main terrorists: These leaders, all evidently male, wear thick padded uniforms, something like one of Spider-Man's enemies, the Shocker, but in "urban camouflage" patterns (mottled gray-black-olive designs meant to blend into urban backgrounds). It's awfully hot clothing for this season, but the terrorists show no signs of discomfort; they don't even perspire. They wear elaborate, gadget-laden belts or strange pendants whose functions are revealed below. All four carry futuristic firearms of different types. The heroes don't recognize any of the weapon styles.

The main terrorists hide their faces with red ski masks. Heroes with appropriate senses can see under the masks. The main terrorists all have ordinary features, unusual only in being so usual. None look Wakandan.

The subordinate terrorists: These followers wear uniforms of urban cammo, not padded. They carry military-issue machine pistols (*Players' Book,* page 42). They conceal their faces with black ski masks that leave the mouth exposed. Experienced heroes can identify the subordinates as well-known New York thugs, previously unaffiliated with any political movement or terrorist group. Most are male, but a few can be female if the Judge wishes.

Attack Methods

Any attack works normally on the subordinate terrorists. Heroes quickly discover that these are just ordinary thugs. But the terrorist leaders present a different challenge.

Ambush: This doesn't work. The main terrorists appear invulnerable to surprise attacks. Either they somehow sense heroes sneaking up behind them or, even stranger, the heroes attacks always miss! What's more, the terrorist leaders react slowly to these assaults and may ignore them altogether.

Mental or magical attacks: Mentalist heroes soon find, just as the White Queen did, that these attacks do not affect the main terrorists. No telepath can read their thoughts. It's as though they don't exist in this dimension.

Physical assault or capture: The heroes' attempts to catch the main terrorists all fail, for the supposed Wakandans soon exhibit startling movement

powers. The terrorist leaders vanish, sometimes from right under the heroes' grip (or webbing, or other entangling device). What's even stranger, each main terrorist uses a different method:

—One terrorist runs his fingertips over a complex-looking series of dials on his wide metal belt. Yellow energy crackles around him, and the air smells of ozone. Suddenly he vanishes! With a *bamf* sound, air rushes in to fill the spot he vacated.

—A second terrorist grasps an amulet around his neck. Perceptive heroes notice that it appears to be a jade pendant carved with the grinning visage of a Chinese dragon. The terrorist murmurs an incantation in a language no hero has ever heard (though it sounds Oriental). Then he disappears in a cloud of mist.

—A third terrorist, who carries nothing that looks extraordinary, simply walks through a solid wall of the ballroom and doesn't come out the other side. The inner wall makes *zzz-zzzt* sounds for a moment but appears unaffected.

—Finally, the fourth terrorist runs his hand from the top of his head down his body to his feet. Where his fingertips touch his body, they draw a sparkling green line. When the line extends the length of his body, the terrorist reaches into the line with both hands and pulls it outward into a wide sheet. In one smooth motion, he wraps the sheet around himself, and the inside-out terrorist disappears.

The terrorists reappear on the balcony, down below, or somewhere else nearby to threaten the hostages, especially the White Queen. When the heroes attack, the terrorists vanish again—using different methods from the ones before! Lightning flashes, transformations into hot steam, steps through glowing doorways, even favors from tiny green imps—the Judge should feel free to improvise any bizarre device that produces a dramatic effect.

Examining the items: Should a hero grab a belt, amulet, or sparkling green sheet from one of the Wakandan terrorists, the item vanishes in the hero's hand! Magicians can detect no residual magic; scientists can't find unusual radiation of any sort.

The Secret

Actually, the villainous illusionist Mastermind (described in the *Judge's Book,* page 51) has created the four main "terrorists." When a hero sees the villains vanish, this is merely Mastermind ending the illusion—or the hero has moved out of range of Mastermind's power.

Through his illusory creations, Mastermind hired the subordinate terrorists from New York's ranks of criminal henchmen. These flunkies do the actual physical work that an illusion cannot. They don't know much about what's going on, but Mastermind has paid them well—in illusory gold Krugerrands! (If any of these thugs ever make it back to the hidden stashes in their Hell's Kitchen tenements, they'll be surprised when they open those strongboxes Mastermind gave them.)

Mastermind is taking revenge on the Hellfire Club for refusing him membership. Under the name Jason Wyngarde, Mastermind tried to lure Phoenix, at that time a member of the X-Men, into becoming the club's Black Queen. This coup would have earned Mastermind membership as well, by demonstrating his usefulness to the Inner Circle. The plan failed disastrously, and so did Mastermind's chances for Hellfire Club membership.

By simulating this terrorist attack, Mastermind hopes to provoke the Hellfire Club's Inner Circle into publicly demonstrating their mutant powers, thus discrediting the organization. He never expected the situation to last long enough for super heroes to show up, but he doesn't mind their arrival. Perhaps they can force the Inner Circle's hand.

The Wakandan connection is a red herring. There is no United Front for Wakandan Liberation. In typically short-sighted fashion, Mastermind chose this name because it sounded exotic; he can't even find Wakanda on a map of Africa.

Detecting Mastermind's Scheme

The key is Mastermind's impatience. As the Inner Circle members continue to conceal their powers, and as the heroes continue to fight, Mastermind steps up the main terrorists' abilities. The illusions grow ever more outrageous, as:

—A terrorist flies gracefully through the air, spraying the walls with bullets;

—Another grows large enough to touch the ballroom ceiling, then grinds a hero briefly beneath his heel;

—The third terrorist telekinetically draws books in from the library and sets them aflame with rays of heat from his eyes;

—The fourth terrorist throws his voice around the room, imitates heroes' voices exactly, and otherwise creates confusion. Then he stretches his arms like Mister Fantastic to punch heroes from across the room!

Given Mastermind's Unearthly ability to cast illusions, the sky is the limit—a phrase that may spring to a hero's mind when a terrorist gestures and the Hellfire Club's roof appears to evaporate!

Soon the heroes should start asking sensible questions like, "If these guys can turn people into frogs, why weren't they doing it before now?" From there, the answer to the puzzle is a simple matter of deduction.

The giveaway clue? A suspicious hero receives an Intuition FEAT roll. A result of yellow or better means the hero spots a one-time tiny wavering at the edge of an illusion, a single glimmer that reveals its phantasmal nature. This won't, however, help the hero in later attempts to disbelieve Mastermind's illusions, since the illusions involve mind control and appear so thoroughly real.

Finding Mastermind

Mastermind is hiding in the second-floor meeting room between the Inner Circle's two private rooms (see the earlier description of the Hellfire Club. He's the M on the map). Through a peephole, Mastermind can survey the entire ballroom and second floor balconies, the only areas where the "terrorists" appear.

If a hero enters this room early in the adventure, perhaps through the bedroom closet hatch from the roof, Mastermind turns invisible and the room appears empty.

Later in the adventure, if he spots a hero approaching his hideout, Mastermind causes the terrorists to "teleport" up to the balcony and drive the invader away. Should this fail to stop the hero from entering the room, Mastermind turns invisible, drops his terrorist illusions, and fills the meeting room with dinosaurs, giant tentacled things, huge bugs, and similar horrors. Mastermind hopes the hero will be preoccupied fighting these weird illusions, giving the villain time to slip away along the balcony.

Continued on page 37

OF KINGS UNKNOWN

BY RANDY MAXWELL

This strange fruit has an unusual aftertaste.

Artwork by Jeff Menges

Randy writes: "I have always enjoyed challenging PCs with variations of standard monsters. However, simply springing a tribe of two-headed kobolds on them without explanation inevitably results in such jeers and jibes as, 'Yeah, right! What's next, three-headed kobolds?' or 'Hey, look! Halfling ettins!' The hard part in creating variations is coming up with plausible explanations for their existence. I have attempted, with this module, to give DMs one possible source for variations."

"Of Kings Unknown" is an AD&D® adventure for 4 to 8 characters of 2nd to 4th level (about 18 total levels). The adventuring party may be of any class, alignment, or race, but a mixed party of experienced players containing a few strong warriors is recommended. The scenario may be dropped into an ongoing campaign or used as a stand-alone adventure. It can be located in any area with a temperate climate and a sparse population. DMs desiring more information on the orcish deities mentioned in the adventure can consult *Unearthed Arcana*.

Adventure Background

The PCs are on a hunt for moonmelons. A merchant who specializes in selling alchemical ingredients is paying a 100-gp bounty for each whole moonmelon brought in. Like horse feathers, hens' teeth, and soft-hearted goblins, moonmelons are a very rare (thus expensive) commodity. The PCs, being short of money or just plain greedy, view the melon hunt as an opportunity to pick up some quick and easy cash.

Moonmelons were created long ago by a mage attempting to alchemically alter normal melons into a highly nutritious foodstuff. The mage hoped to create a melon that would supply an individual with all nutritional and liquid requirements for an entire day of hot and prolonged hard work. The mage's attempts failed, and he simply discarded his failures on a rubbish heap near his laboratory. Most of the experimental melon plants he created quickly withered away to nothing. One did not. It was a melon about the size of a small cantaloupe, with a smooth, yellow and gray piebald rind that when ripe resembled a full moon. The birds, rats, and other creatures that fed at the mage's rubbish heap ate the discarded melons and,

through their droppings, spread undigested seeds of the moonmelon far and wide.

The moonmelon's nutritional qualities are somewhat dubious; it is actually less nutritious than most normal melons. More important, this melon is known to cause mutations and alterations in the offspring of any creature partaking of it. At one time, moonmelons were to be found in nearly every country with a temperate climate. However, because of their well-deserved sinister reputation, that soon changed. Farmers and ranchers regard the melons as an extreme nuisance, causing abnormalities in their livestock and sometimes fierce and odd changes in the wild creatures near their farms and grazing lands. For this reason, farmers and ranchers everywhere destroy moonmelon patches as soon as they are discovered. In heavily farmed and civilized regions the moonmelon has ceased to exist, with each and every patch hunted down and put to the torch. Now, moonmelon patches are found only in wild or sparsely populated areas. But in spite of this bad reputation, moonmelons are valuable to those interested in alchemical experimentation.

For the Dungeon Master

The merchant paying the bounty for the moonmelons supplied the PCs with directions for locating a moonmelon patch. But when the PCs arrived at the moonmelon patch, they found it stripped bare. Every last moonmelon had been picked, and only the bare vines remain. There is a clear trail heading due north from the patch. It is obvious that the melon pickers took this trail, which leads through lightly forested hills to end at a narrow opening on the western side of a large hill. If PCs want moonmelons, they're going to have to enter this opening to find them.

Moonorcs

The opening the PCs have discovered is the entrance to a lair populated by moon-creatures, offspring of those who have eaten moonmelons (see Moonmelon Effect Tables for details). This particular lair is occupied by moonorcs. This tribe started out as a simple band of outlaw orcs. But as is common with orcs, the outlaws rapidly depleted their food supply by overhunting and overscavenging the area near their lair. As the outlaws grew hungry, they had a choice between starving to death or eating the moonmelons that grew nearby. The moonorcs are the children of the original outlaws. They now regularly feed off the moonmelon patch and even make a ritual of feeding moonmelon pulp and juice to their young. In this way, another generation of moonorcs is assured.

The moonorc society differs only slightly from that of normal orc tribes. Unlike normal orcs, the moonorcs are ruled by a tribunal rather than a single chieftain. However, like normal orcs, the tribunal is composed of the most powerful members of the tribe. These particular tribunal members are more intelligent than the average orc. They see the benefit of cooperative effort to achieve tribal goals and attempt to work together and avoid destructive power struggles. Each tribunal member controls a particular sphere of tribal life. The current tribunal contains a shaman, a warrior, and a special character: an orcish wizard (see areas 6, 9, and 10 for the details on these moonorc leaders).

Also, the moonorcs hold to a very strict spartan code. Only the largest, strongest, and most intelligent offspring are allowed to live; all others are put to death. Unless otherwise noted, any moonorcs encountered have the following basic statistics:

Female or young moonorc: Int Avg; AL LE; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 10; XP 15; MC plus Moonmelon Tables; club, knife, no armor.

Average moonorc: Int Avg; AL LE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 1d10+1; hp 8; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1; SD opponents suffer –1 penalty to damage rolls; MR nil; SZ M; ML 12; XP 120; MC plus Moonmelon Tables; studded leather armor, shield, hand axe or short bow (with 2-20 arrows), spear, dagger.

Elite moonorc: Int Avg; AL LE; AC 3; MV 9; HD 1d10+3; hp 11; THAC0 17; # AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +2; SA attacks as 3-HD monster; SD opponents suffer –1 penalty to damage rolls, half damage from blunt weapons; MR nil; SZ M; ML 14; XP 175; MC plus Moonmelon Tables; ring mail, shield, sword, spear or short bow, dagger.

These statistics are just the basics. The DM is encouraged to roll on the Oddities Table of the Moonmelon Effects Tables included with this module to individualize each moonorc encounter. Such oddities may affect a creatures size, intelligence, etc.

The Tomb of Kings Unknown

The moonorc lair was once an old orcish burial shrine. It is traditional among some orc tribes to build a crypt for their fallen kings, princes, and chieftains. These burial chambers are often quite lavish and filled with a good deal of treasure and valuable items. Given the orcish lifestyle, it is a rare thing indeed if an orc chieftain is actually laid to rest in his crypt. The orc tombs are built primarily to feed the vanity of those chieftains still living. To the orcs, the crypt represents an honorable resting place for the spirits of the tribe's past, present, and future chieftains. Because many of the names of past chieftains have long since been forgotten and the names of future chieftains cannot be known, the crypt is always called "Trelgarhk Kivhos Inz" or, in the Common tongue, "The Tomb of Kings Unknown."

It is a fact of orcish life that their chiefs and kings often die in battle on some foreign field far from home and, given the fortunes of war, are laid to rest where they fail or are left to rot. Those chiefs lucky enough (or unlucky enough, as the case may be) to survive their battlefield exploits must still live through tumultuous tribal politics. Most orc chieftains do not retire but die in office, either by quick assassination or prolonged bloody coup. The victor in such a confrontation, whether chieftain or usurper, is not the least bit interested in giving the loser a decent burial in the tomb. What exactly is done with (or to) the body of a dethroned chieftain or an unsuccessful pretender to the throne is best left to the imagination.

It is considered a blasphemy among orcs for anyone to violate these tombs by using them as hideouts or lairs. However, as is often the case with orc tribes, such rules are more often honored in word than in deed. Thus, the moonorcs have no qualms about using the tomb as their lair and have added certain embellishments for comfort and security. The tomb has been excavated from the solid rock of the hillside. The entire complex is fairly well made, with smooth walls and floors. The ceilings of the tunnels and chambers are a lofty 20' overhead and have not been smoothed or worked,

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Moonmelon Effects

A creature who eats any of the meat or rind of a moonmelon or drinks any of its juice seems to be completely unaffected. However, the effects of dining on a moonmelon somehow disrupt the normal reproductive processes at a basic level. All creatures are affected by moonmelons: birds, mammals, insects, reptiles, and even most oozes, slimes, and molds. The offspring of any creature affected by moonmelons are universally referred to as mooncreatures: moonlizards, moonrats, moonbears, moonmen, etc. The effects of eating moonmelons last but a single generation. The offspring of mooncreatures are themselves perfectly normal. Thus, a monkey who ate a moonmelon would have moonmonkeys for children, but the children of the moonmonkeys would be normal monkeys.

The effects of the moonmelon are permanent and last the lifetime of the creature eating it unless magically cured by a *heal* spell. The effects remain the same whether only a small portion of a melon is eaten or if 100 melons are eaten. Not all alterations and changes caused by moonmelons are negative, but they are all permanent whether harmful or helpful and cannot be altered by *heal* spells.

As moonmelon seeds are spread in the droppings of creatures who eat them, moonmelon patches can appear anywhere. DMs can use moonmelons to alter almost any monster or creature they wish. Consult the following tables for the types and kinds of changes caused by moonmelons. All bonuses and penalties are cumulative. Should any penalty or bonus result in a fraction, round up all fractions of 1/2 or more and round down all fractions of less than 1/2.

DMs are free to change the type of plant involved to suit the needs of their individual campaigns. Campaigns in heavily forested environments might be better served with moonapples, moonberries, or a generic moonfruit of some kind, while a tropical isle campaign can contain coconutmoons, etc. DMs can use virtually any edible plant (of at least slightly spherical shape) that is indigenous to the campaign area as the "moonplant."

Size (Roll 2d6)

If the size of the offspring is increased or decreased, its appearance remains unchanged. The creature appears to be a larger or smaller version of its parent. However, size can cause penalties or bonuses with regard to hit points and damage rolls (a smaller creature has fewer hit points and does less damage per hit, while a larger creature has more hit points and does more damage).

2: Mooncreature is half normal size and uses six-sided rather than eight-sided hit dice. The mooncreature also suffers a –2 penalty on damage rolls.
3-4: Mooncreature is 3/4 normal size. The creature uses eight-sided hit dice with a –1 penalty per hit die. The mooncreature also suffers a –1 penalty on damage rolls.
5-9: Mooncreature is normal size, has normal hit dice, and scores normal damage.
10-11: Mooncreature is 1 1/2 times normal size, uses 10-sided rather than eight-sided hit dice, and gains a +1 bonus on damage rolls.
12: Mooncreature is twice normal size and uses 10-sided rather than eight-sided hit dice. It gains a +1 bonus per hit die and a +2 bonus on all damage rolls.

Intelligence (Roll 2d6)

Intelligence may have a profound effect on a creature's behavior, or it may have no effect at all. A giant ant may have its intelligence raised by four points but, being a simple cog in the complex social machine of the ant colony, its behavior would remain unaltered. On the other hand, a baboon with this same four-point increase may begin using weapons or take up farming. DMs should note that offspring of any creatures that normally have an intelligence greater than zero will not be able to survive if their intelligence is reduced to zero. Such mooncreatures are not equipped with the instinctive survival behaviors and skills of normal nonintelligent beings. Therefore, without these instinctive safeguards and without their natural intelligence, they are simply unable to avoid obviously dangerous situations or take advantage of beneficial ones.

2: Intelligence is reduced by four points or to zero, whichever is applicable. If the creature normally has zero intelligence, the creature suffers a –3 penalty on to-hit rolls.
3-4: Intelligence is reduced by two points or to zero, whichever is applicable. If the creature normally has zero intelligence, the creature suffers a –1 penalty on to-hit rolls.
5-9: Intelligence is within normal range for the type of creature involved.
10-11: Intelligence is raised by two points. Maximum intelligence for any mooncreature is 20. DMs should ignore any points beyond that total.
12: Intelligence is raised by four points. Maximum intelligence for any mooncreature is 20. DMs should ignore any points beyond that total.

Armor Class (Roll 2d6)

Changes to armor class include any toughening or weakening of the mooncreature's hide, skin, exoskeleton, or internal skeletal structure and organs. The DM will have to determine exactly why any specific creature's armor class is raised or lowered. For example, a creature's skin may become leathery and tough, or it may become much more supple and resilient than normal In either case, the blow of a weapon is now absorbed without doing a great deal of damage. Or the opposite may be true; the creature becomes much stiffer and more brittle than normal, causing any blows to do serious cracking and fracturing damage.

2: Armor class is penalized by 3. Opponents score double damage when using blunt weapons and gain +1 to all damage rolls.
3-4: Armor class is penalized by 1, and opponents gain +1 to damage rolls.
5-9: No penalties or bonuses apply.
10-11: Armor class is increased by 1, and opponents suffer –1 penalties to damage rolls.
12: Armor class is increased by 3. Opponents suffer –1 penalties to damage rolls. Blunt weapons do half damage.

Constitution (Roll 2d6)

Moonmelons can also profoundly affect a creature's constitution. Constitution and size can, in combination, create extremely tough or fragile creatures. Roll for constitution as directed below, then use the Constitution Table in the 2nd edition *PHB*, page 15, to assess penalties or bonuses. All mooncreatures

are treated as warriors on the Constitution Table.

2: Roll 1d4 for the constitution.
3: Roll 1d4+4 for constitution.
4-10: Roll 1d4+8 for constitution.
11: Roll 1d4+12 for constitution.
12: Roll 1d4+16 for constitution.

Dexterity (Roll 2d6)

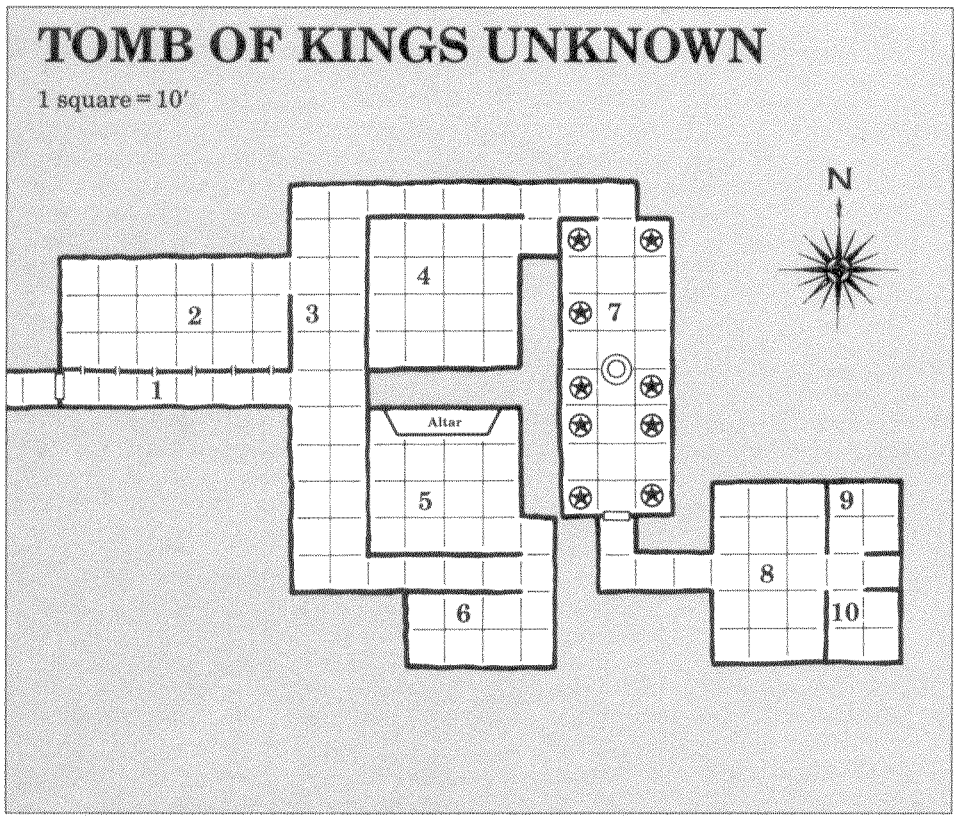
Dexterity bonuses and penalties apply only to those creatures with measurable dexterity. Movement rate penalties and bonuses apply to any creature with a movement rate and affect all movement rates applicable to the creature (flying, swimming, burrowing, in web, etc.) DMs should note that the initiative bonuses and penalties from this table are permanent, and are added to or subtracted from the base initiative rolls before any situational modifiers are used.

2: Dexterity is 1d4, and movement rate is reduced to 50% of normal. All initiative rolls are made as if creature were both *slowed* and hindered (see Table 55: Standard Modifiers to Initiative, on page 94 of the 2nd edition *PHB*.
3: Dexterity is 1d4+4, and movement rate is only 75% of normal. All initiative rolls are made as if creature were *slowed* (see Table 55 as above).
4-10: Dexterity and movement are normal for the type of creature involved. Initiative is rolled normally.
11: Dexterity is 1d4+12, and movement rate is increased by 25%. Initiative rolls are made as if the creature were *hasted* (see Table 55 as above).
12: Dexterity is 1d4+16 but will not exceed 20. Movement rate is increased by 50%. All initiative rolls are made as if creature were *hasted* and set to receive a charge (see Table 55 as above).

Oddities (Roll 1d100)

Moonmelons cause completely unpredictable changes in a creature's appearance and structural form. When any mooncreature is encountered, the DM should roll once on this table to determine if the mooncreature has any noticeably odd characteristics. If the number rolled is not applicable to the creature involved (such as extra limbs or eyes for a creature that has no limbs or eyes), the DM can either choose an appropriate oddity from the table, roll again, or consider the roll shows no noticeable oddities.

01-15: No noticeable oddities.
16-35: Radically different coloration of fur, hide, skin, feathers, etc. These color changes can be either advantageous or disadvantageous to the creature, depending on whether the new color camouflages the creature or destroys its natural camouflage. A creature's color can be changed to any other color in the spectrum. The DM is free to create moonyeti with bright green fur or bright red moontrolls. Moonzebras with red and green stripes are possible, as are giant moonrats with bright yellow fur and red underbellies. The color changes and color combinations are left to the DM and are limited only by the imagination.
36-50: The eyes are much different than normal. Roll 1d6 to determine the type of eyes: 1 = huge and protruding; 2 = small and stalked like a crab's; 3 = large and turreted, move independently like a chameleon; 4 = appear normal but creature has 1d4 additional eyes; 5 = multifaceted like an insect's; 6 = the creature appears to have no eyes (any eye sockets are empty, but the creature moves and reacts like one with normal vision).
51-65: The eyes appear and function normally except for their color. Roll 1d6 to determine eye color: 1 = solid black; 2 = blank white; 3 = glowing red; 4 = glowing, venomous green; 5 = putrid pink; 6 = opalescent.
66-75: The skull or head is adorned with unusual outgrowths. While it is possible for a creature to attack with these outgrowths, this mutation does not give the mooncreature an additional attack per round. Roll 1d4 to determine the type of adornment: 1 = antlers, as a small deer, that do 1-2 hp slashing and rending damage each; 2 = horns, as a small bull, doing 1-3 hp stabbing damage each; 3 = single horn, like a small unicorn horn without magical properties, doing 1-4 hp stabbing damage; 4 = curved horns, like a ram, that can be used to butt an opponent for 1-4 hp damage.
76-85: Mooncreature has a tail, or if the mooncreature is of a type that normally has a tail, the tail is changed in purpose or function. While it is possible for a creature to use its tail for attack, this does not give the mooncreature an additional attack per round. Roll 1d4 to determine the type of tail: 1 = short, useless, and nonfunctioning; 2 = long and prehensile, can be used to hold a shield or other object but cannot be used in attack; 3 = long and segmented, ending in a nonpoisonous stinger that does 1-4 hp damage; 4 = long and whiplike, can be used to inflict 1-2 hp damage.
86-95: DM's choice or roll again.
96-00: Multiple oddities. Roll three times on this table. DM may choose or roll again in the case of duplicate or contradictory results.



but left in the original ragged state of their excavation.

1. Entrance. As PCs can see from the hillside, there has been no attempt to camouflage this long bare tunnel with several arrow slits along the northern wall. The moonorc guards (see area 2) will allow the entire PC party to enter the entrance tunnel before they make any attacks. When the party has entered, or if a retreat is attempted before the entire party has entered, the moonorcs in the guardroom release a stone door that falls across the entrance. DMs should note that, while this door's location is marked on the map, the PCs have only a 10% chance of actually detecting the door until it drops behind them. A combined strength of 26 is required to lift the door. The cramped tunnel allows only two individuals to work together in lifting the door. The door was originally used to seal the tomb, but the moonorcs have added a simple system of pulleys so that the door can be lowered or lifted as needed.

2. Guardroom. This room was added by the moonorcs to protect the entrance to their lair. It is always manned by eight average warriors and two young moonorcs who act as errand runners, all supervised by one elite warrior (hp 11). These guards are able to watch the entrance and the nearby area outside. The room contains a crude table, several stools, and a crudely made wooden box containing 50 arrows.

The guards can release the stone door to block the entrance tunnel by simply cutting the rope used to raise and lower it. When the stone door is released, the guards immediately begin firing arrows through the arrow splits. When intruders enter the entrance tunnel, an errand runner is sent immediately to the crypt (see area 8) to rouse the other moonorcs. Ten elite warriors arrive 1d4+4 rounds after the errand runner is sent. When these warriors arrive, the guards cease firing arrows and join the fight in the tunnel.

3. Hall of Heroes. The walls of this long, wide hallway are covered with crudely painted murals depicting battles that depict famous victories of orcs over the armies of dwarves, men, and elves. The painted heroes are engaged in absurdly spectacular feats of valor and skill at arms.

4. Trophy Room. This room once contained trophies of war. Swords, spears, and armor of all kinds were dedicated here to the everlasting glory of the fallen orc leaders. Centuries ago, the walls were draped with elven banners, dwarven sigils, gnomic heraldry, and the flags and standards of men, goblins, and various orc tribes. The moonorc leaders have stripped the room of anything useful in order to outfit the tribe. The weapons and armor were quickly divided among the warriors, while the flags and banners were torn down and used for blankets or ripped apart and resewn into bags, sacks, and clothing. The room now contains only refuse and rusty, unusable equipment.

5. Altar of Yurtrus. Originally, this area was a small chapel dedicated to the entire pantheon of orcish deities. The moonorcs have reconsecrated it to Yurtrus alone (Yurtrus is the orc deity of death and disease). The room is always guarded by four elite warriors. They defend the altar room to the death and will not leave to defend other areas of the lair unless directly ordered by their shaman. The warriors fear Gungle the shaman more than they fear dying.

The room stinks of death, filth, and rot. The white altar of Yurtrus stands against the north wall. Directly in front of and below it is an executioner's block. This block and the area around it are splattered with bloodstains (it is this festering bloody mess that is causing the awful smell). Prisoners, slaves, and other unfortunates are sacrificed by beheading before the altar. Sacrifices are offered every full moon. Any PCs captured by the moonorcs will be sacrificed during the next full moon. As sacrificial offerings, any such prisoners are not subject to ransom and must be physically rescued rather than released through negotiation.

A large hollowed-out log that looks like a watering trough for horses is attached to the west wall about 4' off the ground. This is actually a baptismal font of sorts. When a young moonorc is of proper size, strength, and intelligence, it is initiated into the tribe. This ritual requires the trough to be filled with the juice and pulp of moonmelons. The young initiate is then dunked several times in the messy trough (virtually to

the point of drowning) and emerges as a full-fledged member of the tribe. During this initiation, the young moonorcs are given several bowls of a horrid moonshine made from moonmelons, thus assuring the continuity of the moonorc tribe. Apparently, such an initiation ritual is close at hand, for the trough is filled with moonmelon pulp and juice. This moonmelon pulp and juice is ruined and cannot be sold by the PCs.

6. Gungle's Quarters. Gungle is the shaman of the moonorc tribe and one of the members of the ruling tribunal. This room was added to the tomb at his direction. He uses the room as bedroom, meditation chamber, and storage for the chapel. The room contains a chest containing three ornate scroll tubes worth 10 gp each. One of the tubes contains a scroll with the priest spell *silence, 15' radius.*

Gungle (5th-level shaman): AL LE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 1d10 + 4d4+2; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1 or by spell; S 16, D 16, C 16, I 13; SA fights as 3-HD monster; SD opponents suffer –1 penalty to damage rolls; takes only half damage from blunt weapons; MR nil; SZ M; ML 14; XP 270; unarmored, footman's mace; spells: *cause fear, cause light wounds, darkness, fire trap, hold person, spiritual hammer, animate dead.* The moonorc shaman's statistics have been taken from the *Monstrous Compendium* concerning orcish shamans and modified using the Moonmelon Tables in this module.

Gungle appears to be a large normal orc, but his eyes are multifaceted like those of an insect (see Oddities Table). Gungle is a priest of Yurtrus, and his spells are of two types: those that are harmful to the living, and those that deal directly with the dead or undead. When the orcs' spartan code is invoked, the unfit are sacrificed before the altar of Yurtrus. Gungle personally carries out the "purification rituals" that eliminate all perceived weaklings from the tribe. The shaman feels no enmity toward these weaklings. He simply considers this course of action the right and proper thing to do. Gungle is responsible for the spiritual welfare of the tribe, and it is his responsibility to assure that the gods are appeased and look upon the tribe with favor. He is devout beyond reason and will uphold the tenets of Yurtrus regardless of the consequences.

Gungle is always accompanied by his three skeleton bodyguards (once human slaves). Should the lair be breached, Gungle's primary concern is with the defense of the altar room (area 5). In battle, the shaman always lets the skeletons take the brunt of any attack, but this does not mean he will let them be pointlessly destroyed. He uses the skeleton bodyguards intelligently as both shields and weapons.

Skeletons (3): Int Non; AL N; AC 7; MV 12; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SD immune to *sleep, charm,* and *hold* spells; MR special; SZ M; ML special; XP 65; MC.

7. Guardroom of the Spirit. This room has several large, roughly carved statues of orc warriors and shamans, all in fierce, warlike poses. These spirit totems were made by the original builders of the tomb to guard and protect the crypt room. They have no real power and are nothing more than crude figures. However, there is a large open fire pit in the center of the room. The flickering light from this often causes the shadows of the statues to loom large, swirling and

dancing about the walls. If combat takes place in this room, there is a 20% chance that any PC using a missile attack or casting a targeted spell (such as *magic missile, ray of enfeeblement, lightning bolt,* etc.), will mistake one of these shadows for a target and waste the missile or spell.

The moonorcs use the area as a communal gathering and eating area, and the females and the young also sleep here. The room is cluttered with orcish junk: crude mining tools, large cooking pots, eating utensils, half-cured hides used for sleeping mats, etc. There is nothing of value to be found here.

The area is occupied by 22 female and young moonorcs, and 11 average warriors. If the PCs enter this room, the warriors attack while the females and young attempt to cut off any retreat by the PCs. If the warriors appear to be getting the worst of the battle, the females and young join the fight without hesitation.

8. Crypt. This large room is the crypt of the Tomb of Kings Unknown. It contains several large, empty stone sarcophagi. The moonorc warriors use this room as their barracks, making use of the sarcophagi as beds, tables, storage bins—and as cells for prisoners. The heavy stone lid of each sarcophagus requires a combined strength of 21 to lift and move it. This makes the stone coffins excellent holding cells for all but the strongest creatures. The sarcophagi are not airtight, even with orcs sitting on their heavy lids, but prisoners soon grow very weary of such a lightless, stuffy environment. Any PCs captured by moonorcs will be held prisoner in the sarcophagi until the next full moon (see area 5 for details on what will happen to the unfortunate PCs during the full moon).

If the PCs have been able to sneak into the lair, they find this room occupied by 10 elite warriors. If the guards in area 2 detected PCs entering the lair, this room is empty when the PCs arrive here. The 10 elite warriors are out looking for the PCs. All other moonorc warriors are in areas 2, 5, and 7.

If PCs search inside the sarcophagi, they can find the following arms and armor: 25 spears, three long swords, three short swords, six axes, 12 daggers, two suits of leather armor (fit halflings only), and two suits of ring mail (fit gnomes or dwarves only). All this equipment is of poor to average quality. If sold, the equipment brings only 50-75% of the prices quoted in the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook,* pages 68-69.

9. Erksom's Quarters. This is the sleeping chamber used by tribunal member Erksom. It contains a large mat of hides and a crudely stitched-together blanket made from battle standards of all kinds. Erksom's few valuable possessions are buried in the hides of his sleeping mat. If the PCs begin peeling the stinking hides apart, they can find a leather pouch containing 50 gp in mixed coin, a gold chain and pendant worth 25 gp, three jade rings worth 25 gp each, and a jeweled dagger worth 25 gp.

Erksom: Int Avg; AL LE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 1d10+6; hp 15; THAC0 16 (17 + strength); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +2; S 18, C 20, I 10; SA fights as 3-HD monster and can butt for 1-4 hp damage; SD regenerates 1 hp every six turns; attackers suffer –1 penalty to damage rolls; MR nil; SZ M; ML 14; XP 270; hide armor, flail, *moon blade,* dagger.

Erksom is a mighty warrior twice the size of a normal orc. He has a pair of large horns that protrude from his forehead and curve around the sides of his head (see Oddities Table). He can butt an opponent with these horns for 1-4 hp damage, or double that amount if he has a 20′ running start. His horned skull is worth 100 gp if it can be taken intact. He gains one extra hit point per hit die due to his size, plus an extra five hit points due to his constitution.

Erksom fights with a *moon blade* (see sidebar on page at left). This weapon was once hoarded in the old trophy room (area 4), but Erksom has claimed it for his own and none dare dispute him. His strength, added to the sword's bonuses, gives Erksom +3 on all damage rolls (+4 if his opponent is of good alignment), and this total is doubled if the opponent is a paladin or good-aligned cleric. Also, because of the magical properties of the *moon blade,* Erksom is more than willing to pursue any enemy out into the bright sunshine.

Erksom is the war leader of the tribe and responsible for training warriors, obtaining weapons, planning raids, and defending the lair. He disdains personal bodyguards and will be at the forefront of any battle. Quite simply, Erksom loves to fight and prefers fighting to negotiating regardless of the odds. If the PCs have been able to sneak into the lair undetected, Erksom will be in this room. If the PCs have been seen or heard entering the moonorc lair, the errand runner from the guardroom (area 2) also rouses Erksom. In this case, the war leader arrives one round after the 10 elite warriors from the crypt (area 10).

In the northeast corner of the room, Erksom has constructed a small shrine to Bahgtru, his patron deity (the orcish deity of strength). There is friction between Gungle and Erksom over the shrine, but this dispute has not yet erupted into open conflict. Erksom displays his battle trophies—the shattered skulls of opponents he defeated in

Moon Blade

This sword is the opposite of a *sun blade.* It is the size of a bastard sword and does damage as a bastard sword, but due to its enchantment can be wielded as if it were a short sword with respect to encumbrance, speed factor, etc. Any individual able to use a bastard sword or short sword may use a *moon blade.*

In normal combat, the pale yellow blade of the weapon is equal to a *sword +1.* When wielded against a good-aligned creature the bonus is +2. Against paladins and good-aligned clerics, the sword scores double damage. All *moon blades* are of evil alignment.

Moon blades have a special *moonbeam* power. Once per day, upon command, the blade can be swung vigorously above the head, and it will shed a soft, pale light that is like moonlight. The light immediately illuminates a 10′ radius around the sword-wielder and spreads outward at 5′ per round for 10 rounds. When the swinging stops, the light fades to a dim glow that persists for another turn before disappearing. Unlike the normal *moonbeam* spell, the sword's *moonbeam* power works equally well in daylight or darkness. It can light a dark place or dim the sunshine. When used in daylight, the light in the area of effect is dimmed to that of pale moonlight or a dark night. This power is extremely helpful to creatures unable to abide the sun. Creatures that normally fight with a penalty in bright sunshine, such as goblins, orcs, and kobolds, have all such penalties eliminated when fighting in the sword's *moonbeam* area of effect.

XP Value: 2,000

combat—in a semicircle around the shrine. The collection appears to include skulls of almost every race: human, dwarf, gnome, elf, halfling—even most of the goblinoid races are represented. If any PCs are defeated by Erksom, their skulls will join this horrible display.

10. Retch's Quarters. Using charcoal from a cooking fire, Retch has covered the walls of his sleeping chamber with an odd assortment of graffiti, a conglomeration of archaic runes, meaningless symbols, and indecipherable glyphs. However, Retch feels his efforts gives the chamber the mysterious, arcane, and learned appearance that befits a wizard as unique as himself.

Retch (5th-level wizard): Int Avg; AL LE; AC 9; MV 12; HD 1d10 + 4d4+3; hp 19; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1 or by spell; S 16, C 17, I 15; SA fights as 3-HD monster and can sting with tail for 1-4 hp damage; SD opponents suffer –1 penalty to damage rolls; MR nil; SZ M; ML 14; XP 270; unarmored, staff, dagger; spells: *armor, magic missile, sleep, wall of fog, invisibility, web, monster summoning I.*

Retch's higher-than-average intelligence has given him the power to do what almost no other orcs can do—cast wizard's spells. Retch's statistics have been taken from the *Monstrous Compendium* and the 1st Edition *Legends & Lore* (page 90) modified using the Moonmelon Effects Tables.

Retch is the most bizarre member of the tribunal (and one of the strangest-looking creatures in the entire moonorc tribe, for that matter). The orcish wizard is a bright green from head to foot, has a long tail that ends in a stinger (1-4 hp damage), and his eyes glow bright red (see Oddities Table).

Retch is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the tribe. He allocates manpower and resources and does the long-range planning. Gungle has provided Retch with a zombie bodyguard whom Retch uses as a convenient lackey to fetch and carry for him. If any battle is fought in the lair, Retch hurries to join the defense of the Guardroom of the Spirit (area 7). In battle, the orcish wizard uses the zombie as a shield, hiding behind his undead minion while casting spells.

Retch is a decent strategist and, unlike Erksom, is willing to negotiate with enemies. This negotiation is often nothing more than a feint behind which Retch maneuvers moonorc warriors into better battle positions, waits for reinforcements, or attempts to lure a reckless enemy into the open. The orcish wizard prefers to match wits and magic with an opponent before matching weapons.

Zombie (human): Int Non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 2; hp 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SD immune to *sleep, charm,* and *hold* spells plus *death magic* and cold-based attacks; MR special; SZ M; ML special; XP 65; MC.

The room is cluttered with an assortment of wizardly paraphernalia: a ceremonial rattle made from a kobold skull mounted on a short wooden wand and filled with pebbles; bracelets and anklets made of assorted teeth, bones and feathers; ceremonial masks made of carved wood or tooled leather, etc. Among this clutter lies a bone tube containing a scroll of *protection from undead.*

Against the northern wall is a large covered barrel that contains 28 harvested moonmelons that the PCs have been looking for. At the bottom of the barrel is Retch's spell book, wrapped in a thick animal fur. In addition to the spells Retch is listed as knowing, the book contains the following spells: *read magic, spook, knock, levitate,* and *item.* To assure that the other moonorcs stay out of the barrel, Retch has trapped it with a pet poisonous snake. The snake nestles among the melons, and anyone other than Retch who reaches in to get one will likely be bitten (the snake surprises on 1-4 on 1d6). DMs should note that the snake is merely a pet and not a familiar. If the PCs attack the snake with weapons of any kind, they will destroy 1d6+4 melons in the process.

Snake: Int Animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 15; HD 2+1; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison; MR nil; SZ M; ML 8; XP 175; MC.

In the center of the room is a large open wine cask in which moonmelons, rinds and all, are fermenting. These moonmelons are ruined and cannot be sold. Retch brews a strong moonshine out of the melons. This moonmelon liquor tastes dreadful and causes the same effects as eating a moonmelon. It is used primarily during the ritual initiation of young moonorcs to the tribe. Otherwise, Retch and the other moonorc leaders partake of the vile brew only during the rites of Yurtrus at the full moon. There is a five-gallon jug of the awful stuff in one corner of the room. The moonshine is extremely volatile and flammable, and can be used to make fire-based attacks or grenadelike missiles (treat as oil on Table 45: Grenade-Like Missile Effects, page 63 of the 2nd edition *Dungeon Master's Guide).*

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs defeat the moonorcs, they may keep any treasure they find and sell any moonmelons they recover for 100 gp each as promised by the merchant. If good-aligned PCs capture Erksom's *moon blade* but keep it only that it might be safely destroyed, give the party a 2,000 XP bonus. If a good- or neutral-aligned PC claims the blade, with the knowledge that it is evilly aligned, deduct 500 XP from that PC's total. However, anyone in possession of a *moon blade* will attract attention regardless of his alignment. Evil-aligned humans and demi-humans will be very interested in owning such a blade. Any PC claiming the *moon blade* will certainly be visited by thieves willing to kill for it. These visitations will happen continually and often while the PC owns the blade.

As moonmelons might be found anywhere, DMs can use the Moonmelon Effects Tables to create other monsters for PCs to encounter. An intelligent cave bear of twice normal size can terrorize the countryside. A huge lizard man of higher than normal intelligence could lead his tribe on devastating raids. A usually very intelligent korred could be reduced to a creature of low intelligence causing trouble in the forest. The possibilities are limited only by the needs of the DM's campaign. Ω

The Oops File

The map of Hammerkeep on page 8 of "The Ship of Night" (issue #20) was printed upside down. The map was supposed to be cryptic, but not *that* difficult to figure out.

HROTHGAR'S RESTING PLACE

BY STEPHEN J. SMITH

He wanted a scabbard–but got the shaft.

Artwork by Terry Dykstra

Stephen bought a new word processor with his earnings from "The Bane of Elfswood" [issue #21] and hopes to make good use of it writing more D&D® modules. He is currently in mourning for his beloved Boston Bruins, who came up a bit short in their quest for the Stanley Cup. He'll probably use the money from "Hrothgar's Resting Place" to buy tickets for next season.

"Hrothgar's Resting Place" is a short D&D® Expert Set module for 4-6 player characters of levels 4-7 (about 27 total levels). A mix of character types, including at least one cleric and one magic-user or elf, is strongly advised. This adventure is introduced through a treasure map to a combined treasure (see the *Expert Rulebook,* page 61). The DM can slip this treasure map (which takes the form of a wizard's diary) into an existing treasure hoard in another adventure, or even have the PCs find it lying in a gutter in their hometown.

The adventure takes place in the Grand Duchy of Karameikos from the D&D Expert Set and GAZ 1 *The Grand Duchy of Karameikos.* A copy of GAZ 1 might prove helpful to the DM (as it contains an outline map of the city of Kelvin and a large, full-color map of the duchy in its entirety), but this accessory is not necessary.

Adventure Background

The treasure map in this adventure takes the form of an old diary belonging to a wizard named Aeloros Runolfsen. Among other passages detailing several splendid adventures is the following entry, which hints at lost treasures: an intelligent sword and a silver statuette of a lion. The date of the entry is about 25 years in the past.

"Our expedition to the land of Karameikos has come to an end, and we shall begin our long journey home to Soderfjord in the morning. My bold friends and I return home far wealthier than when we left, yet we have paid a steep price as well—our fearless comrade Hrothgar has been lost to us forever.

"While staying in the town of Kelvin, we heard stories that a marauding red dragon had been terrorizing some of the farms north of town, swooping in over the moors to burn down a barn or devour a cow or two. My companions and I, knowing that where there's a dragon there's bound to be treasure, immediately volunteered to hunt down the beast.

"The townspeople eagerly accepted our offer and told us they suspected the creature's home was hidden in the middle of the moors. Fortunately, I knew better than to believe that. No self-respecting dragon—except a black one, perhaps—would dwell in such a bleak, open, forsaken tract of land as the Kelvin moors. I had a hunch the dragon had a cave in the hills north of the moors, so that's where my friends and I started our search.

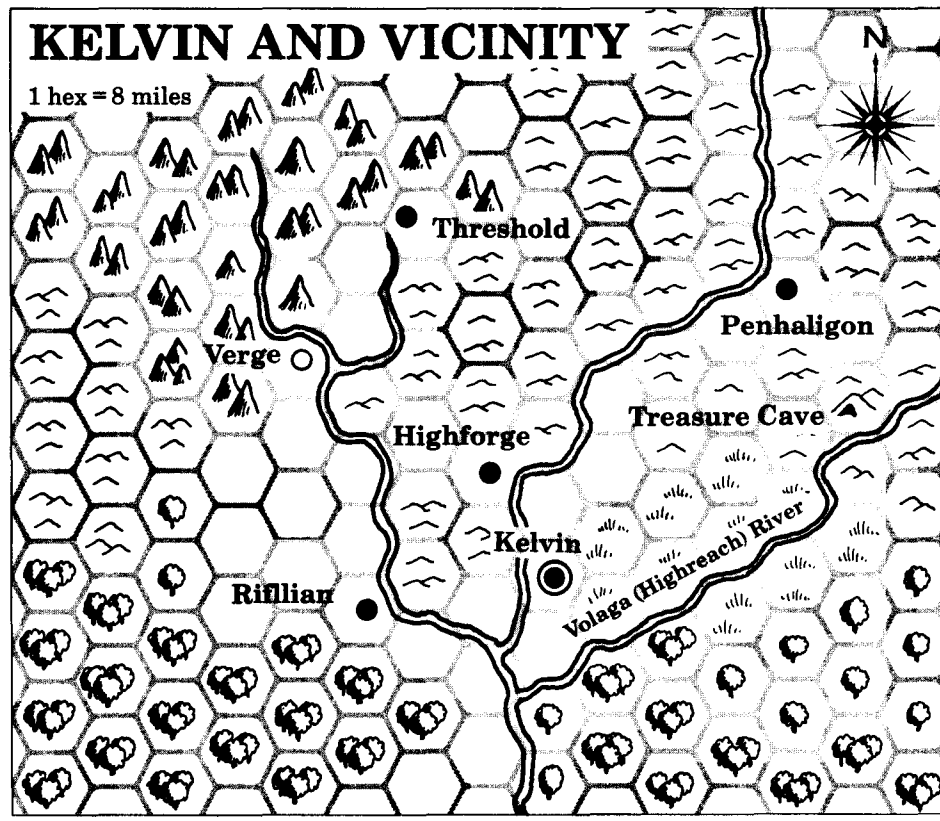
"Our group took the trail leading north out of town, thus avoiding the treacherous bogs and their dangerous denizens. We then headed east, following the edge of the moor where it meets the hills. Eventually, we reached a river—the Volaga, the Karameikans call it—followed it north. A few miles upriver, we spied a large cave in the side of a rocky hill. I knew we had found our dragon.

"My friends and I climbed the rugged hillside and cautiously crept into the cave. Therein we found the dragon, and fortune was on our side—the great beast was asleep! We launched a very successful surprise attack, slaying the wyrm quickly with a minimum of damage to ourselves. The dragon did catch Hrothgar with a feeble blast of its flaming breath, but the poor beast was nearly dead so the barbarian wasn't hurt seriously, although his beard was a bit singed.

"Examining our vanquished foe, I discovered that the dragon was fairly young for its species. As a result, it had not collected nearly as much treasure as its larger, older counterparts might have, but there was still enough gold and jewels to keep our pouches full for some time.

"Near the back of the cavern, Hrothgar found a splendid sword that my spell detected as magical. He also claimed a beautiful statuette of a lion—wrought of silver and inlaid with an assortment of gems—as his share of the loot. While the barbarian admired his new blade and statue, the rest of us sifted through the remainder of the treasure.

"Suddenly Hrothgar let out one of his annoying grunt-laughs and claimed that his new sword was talking to him. The next thing we knew, he was scampering around muttering, 'Scabbard, scabbard. My sword needs a nice new scabbard!' Not finding one in the dragon's main treasure hoard, the barbarian disappeared down a side tunnel.



"That was the last we saw of our dear friend Hrothgar. We heard his long cry of terror and the muffled clang when he hit bottom. The fool had gone off exploring without a light and had fallen into a deep shaft. My companions and I rushed to help, but it was all in vain. We found the pit that had claimed our friend and called down into the darkness, but there was no response from below. I dropped a small stone into the shaft, and it finally hit bottom after several long seconds of silence. We could do no more, however, because the stupid barbarian was carrying our only length of rope when he took his plunge.

"Since Hrothgar's fatal fall, I have come to the conclusion that the blade he found in the dragon's lair was an intelligent sword. Such a sword, I have heard, is capable of bending the will of its wielder if that person is not mentally strong enough to control it. Although Hrothgar's sword arm was highly respected by both friend and foe, intelligence and wisdom are attributes the barbarian did not possess in quantity.

"I fear that Hrothgar fell under the sword's sway, and that is why he romped off on his ill-fated scabbard hunt. Whatever the reason for his demise, I will miss that big, lovable ogre of a man. I can honestly say that Hrothgar was a true friend to all of us, and his brave spirit and steadfast sword arm will be sorely missed but never forgotten."

Although there are a few more entries in Aeloros's diary following the above one, none of the later passages suggest that the wizard and his companions ever made it back to their home city of Soderfjord. If any PC uses a *commune* spell to further investigate the diary, he may learn (if he asks the right questions) that Aeloros and his friends were ambushed and killed during their return journey to Soderfjord, and that Hrothgar's treasures had never been recovered by them.

For the Dungeon Master

Since Aeloros's diary could be discovered by the PCs' almost anywhere in the Known World, it is impossible to include an accurate random encounter table to cover the party's journey to the treasure cave. (For example, adventurers crossing the Alasiyan Desert in Ylaruam would be *very* unlikely to encounter any lizard men, while a party slogging through the great Malpheggi Swamp in Darokin might cross paths with quite a few).

Therefore, the DM should use the Wilderness Encounter Tables provided on pages 30 and 35 of the *Expert Rulebook* for most of the PCs' journey. When the adventurers reach Kelvin and begin to follow the directions given in the diary, the Wilderness Encounter Table located below can be used.

The DM should check for an encounter once every eight miles (one hex) traveled on the Kelvin and Vicinity map. An encounter takes place on a roll of 1-2 on 1d6, and the DM should roll 2d4 to determine what monster(s) the adventurers meet.

If the PCs choose to ignore the diary's warning against traveling through the moors, the DM should (in addition to the regular Random Encounter Check) roll 1d6 for each hex of moor the group crosses. On a roll of 1, the first rank of the party stumbles into a patch of quicksand. Mired characters sink to their deaths in two rounds unless rescued, and they cannot save themselves by ordinary means.

The Treasure Cave

If the PCs are following the directions given in Aeloros's diary, they will spy the cave opening shortly after entering its hex. The cave network itself is unremarkable; it is simply a set of natural caverns and tunnels (see The Treasure Cave map). The floors, ceilings, and walls are a mixture of rock and earth. In caverns, the ceiling height ranges from 20′ (smaller caves) to 35′ (larger caves). In the connecting tunnels, the ceiling hangs 10′ to 15′ overhead.

Upper Level

1. Empty Cavern.

> This vast cavern is empty except for some scattered rubble and a few animal bones. Several alcoves and side tunnels are present, however, including a gaping 30′-wide opening to the east.

There is nothing of interest or value here.

2. The Dragon's Lair.

> This spacious chamber contains much the same rubble as in area 1, but many more bones litter the stony floor. In the center of the room rests the crumbling skeleton of a dragon.

This is the chamber where Aeloros, Hrothgar, and their companions fought and killed the red dragon mentioned in the diary. Although most of the dragon's hoard was removed by its vanquishers and other subsequent looters, a few coins (9 gp and 10 cp) and one onyx gem (250 gp value) remain, buried beneath the bones and rubble. For each turn a PC spends searching the cavern, roll 1d20. A roll of 1-2 indicates that the PC has found something. Again roll 1d20. A result of 1-10 means that a copper piece is found, 11-19 indicates that a gold piece is recovered, and 20 means that the onyx gem is discovered.

3. Small Pit (and a Less-Elusive Gem). This small, 8′-deep pit appears empty when viewed from above, but anyone who actually descends to search can find a small pearl in a far corner. The pearl is worth 500 gp.

4. Troll Quarters. Two trolls—a male and a female—dwell on this rocky shelf. They react quickly to the appearance of any potential meals.

Each of the trolls has fallen prey to the *charming* song of the harpies (see area 6) at one time, but the trolls' regenerative powers prevented the harpies from being able to kill them. When the *charm* effects were broken, the marauding trolls wreaked such havoc in the harpies' lair that the bird-women have left the ever-hungry monsters alone ever since. The trolls, a bit shaken by the experience themselves, have avoided the harpies as well. The trolls have no treasure.

Trolls (2): AC 4; HD 6+3*; hp 34, 26; MV 120′ (40′); #AT 2 claws/1 bite; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-10; Save F6; ML 10 (8 if attacked with fire or acid); AL C; XP 650; ER/56. Trolls can regenerate 3 hp damage per round, starting three rounds after they are first injured.

5. Cavern of the Cave Toads. This area may seem to be unoccupied at first glance, but this is not the case. Three **cave toads** (hp 21, 17, 15; see sidebar for complete statistics) sit quietly against the cavern's south wall at the point marked X.

> Suddenly, you come upon three huge, toadlike creatures crouched near the southern wall. The toads have bumpy, turtlelike shells on their backs and wide staring eyes that glisten eerily as they reflect the light.

Anyone looking into the cave toads' eyes must make a Saving Throw vs. Paralysis or be paralyzed for 2-8 rounds. Surprised characters automatically meet a toad's gaze. The PCs may fight the toads while looking away but suffer a –2 penalty on their to-hit rolls.

Wilderness Encounters (Roll 2d4)

2: **Werewolves** (2): AC 5; HD 4*; hp 22, 20; MV 180′ (60′); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 2-8; Save F4; ML 8; AL C; XP 125; BD/33. These lycanthropes are in animal form and very hungry. They can be hit by only silver or magical weapons.

3: **Goblins** (3-12): AC 6; HD 1–1; hp 4 each; MV 90′ (30′); #AT 1 short sword; Dmg 1-6; Save NM; ML 7; AL C; XP 5; BD/31. If encountered during daylight hours, the goblins suffer a –1 penalty to their to-hit rolls.

4: **Bugbears** (2-5): AC 5; HD 3+1; hp 15 each; MV 90′ (30′); #AT 1 sword; Dmg 1-8 +1; Save F3; ML 9; AL C; XP 75; BD/27. Bugbears surprise their foes on a roll of 1-3 on 1d6. They also receive a +1 bonus to all hit and damage rolls due to their superior strength.

5: **Dire wolves** (2-5): AC 6; HD 4+1; hp 19 each; MV 150′ (50′); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 2-8; Save F2; ML 8; AL N; XP 125; BD/39.

6: **Manticores** (1-2): AC 4; HD 6+1*; hp 28 each; MV 120′ (40′), Flying 180′ (60′); #AT 2 claws/1 bite or 6 spikes; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-8 or 1-6 per spike; Save F6; ML 9; AL C; XP 650; ER/52. Each manticore has a full complement of 24 tail spikes (ranges 50′/100′/180′).

7: **Grizzly bears** (2): AC 8; HD 5; hp 27, 25; MV 120′ (40′); #AT 2 claws/1 bite; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-10; Save F4; ML 10; AL N; XP 175; BD/26. If both paw attacks hit the same opponent, the bear hugs for an additional 2-16 hp damage.

8: **Wyvern:** AC 3; HD 7*; hp 36; MV 90′ (30′), Flying 240′ (80′); #AT 1 bite/1 sting; Dmg 2-16/1-6 plus poison; Save F4; ML 9; AL C; XP 850; ER/57. Anyone stung by the wyvern's tail must make a Saving Throw vs. Poison or die.

The cave toads center their attacks on paralyzed opponents if possible, gaining a +4 bonus to hit. They have no treasure.

The stony incline leading up to area 6 contains many loose rocks. Anyone who attempts to climb this incline must roll his Dexterity score or less on 3d6+1. Anyone who fails this roll slips during the climb, sending a small cascade of loose stones clattering to the cavern floor. No damage is taken by such a PC, but the noise alerts the harpies on the ledge above, and they immediately begin to sing a little welcoming song.

6. Harpies' Ledge. Four adult harpies call this ledge home. They will fight very fiercely to defend their nests (ML 10 instead of 7). If these nests are searched, the PCs will find some grungy but valuable jewelry: a pearl necklace (1,500 gp), a small ruby pendant (1,000 gp), and a thin gold bracelet (600 gp).

Upon discovering intruders, the harpies immediately begin to sing. Each PC who hears this monstrous melody must make a Saving Throw vs. Spells or be *charmed.* Those who save will not be affected by the harpies' singing for the rest of the encounter.

Harpies (4): AC 7; HD 3*; hp 20, 18, 15, 14; MV 60' (20'), Flying 150' (50'); # AT 2 claws/1 short sword plus *charm;* Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-6; Save F6; ML 10; AL C; XP 50; BD/31.

7. Hrothgar's Fall.

> A deep chasm appears in the tunnel floor before you—a chasm so deep that you are unable to see its bottom. Perhaps this is the dark pit that claimed Hrothgar and the treasure you seek!

This is indeed the spot where Hrothgar took his fatal fall. Anyone falling the 120' to the bottom of this shaft suffers 12d6 hp damage and is rendered unconscious for 3-12 turns. Those who successfully listen for noises can hear a faint grinding sound coming from below (the caecilia in area 11).

Getting to the bottom of the shaft is somewhat challenging but not overly difficult. For those without the magical powers of *flying* or *levitation,* there is a small stalagmite near the edge of the pit around which a rope can be fastened. The stalagmite is thin, however, and looks like it could safely support the weight of only one or two characters at a time. If more than two people try to climb down the rope at the same time, there is a cumulative 15% chance per additional person on the rope that the stalagmite will give way, plunging everyone on the rope to the bottom of the pit. Should such a tragedy occur, the DM should roll 1d12 and multiply the result by 10. This figure gives the PCs' height in feet above the bottom of the chasm when the stalagmite gives way. Falling damage is 1-6 hp per 10' fallen.

Once the first group of PCs has begun to descend into the shaft, roll for surprise. A giant black widow spider has been hiding behind a stalactite over the pit. Seeing the PCs in a vulnerable position, it drops down on a single web strand in pursuit of the descending adventurers.

If the PCs are surprised, the spider drops past any persons standing at the top of the pit before they can react. It reaches those climbing down the rope in the next round. If the PCs are not surprised, they may attack the arachnid as it drops past. The spider will not bother to fight adventurers at the top of the shaft, preferring instead to attack those on the rope.

When the giant black widow lowers itself into the pit, it is far enough out over the shaft to be out of range of the melee attacks of PC on the ledge. It may be attacked normally by missile weapons and thrown ones, however. If and when the spider reaches the descending PCs, it attacks them immediately. Characters on the rope can fight back, but at –4 to hit and with a –2 penalty to all damage rolls.

Should any PC aim a missile or thrown weapon to sever the web strand from which the spider hangs, treat the web as AC –2. Any hit breaks the web and plummets the spider to its death. An adventurer who can reach the web (through *flying* or *levitation,* for example) can automatically cut it.

Giant black widow spider: AC 6; HD 3*; hp 20; MV 60' (20'), in web 120' (40'); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 2-12 plus poison; Save F2; ML 8; AL N; XP 50; BD/38. Anyone bitten by the spider must Save vs. Poison or die in 1 turn.

Lower Level

8. Bottom of the Pit.

> Upon reaching the bottom of the pit, you find yourselves in a vast empty cavern. Yes, empty—there is no sign of Hrothgar's skeletal remains or his treasure. At the east end of the chamber, however, are two dark passages, and from them comes a strange grinding sound.

The grinding sound is caused by the burrowing of three caecilia (see area 11). The noise comes from both tunnels but sounds stronger at the entrance of the northeast passage.

Hrothgar's remains and treasure are not present because they were picked up long ago by a gelatinous cube that scours this level of the caves. The barbarian's body was totally dissolved by the cube, but his metal treasures were not. The cube (and the valuables the PCs are seeking) is currently in area 11.

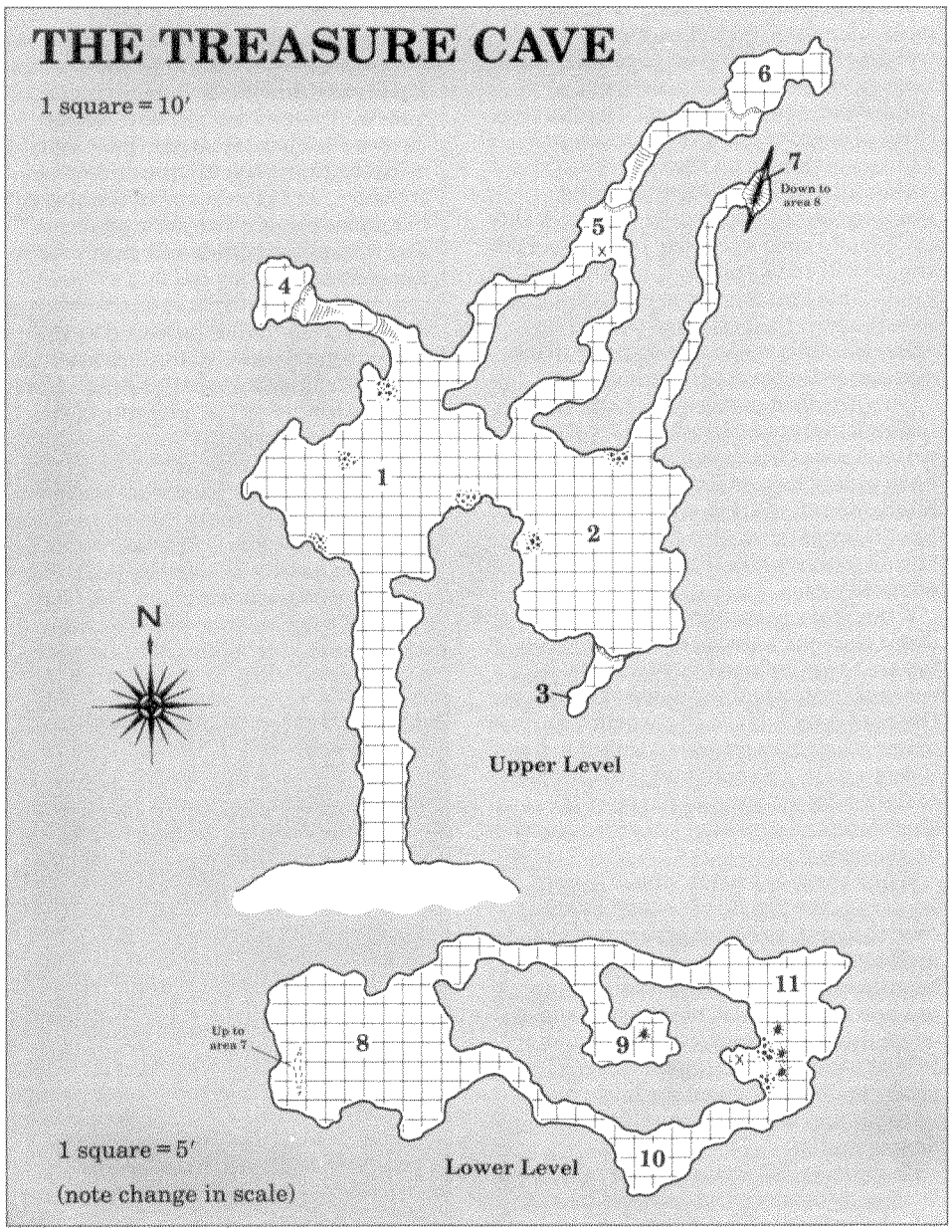
Cave or Rock Toad

The cave (or rock) toad appears in the D&D Companion Set. For those who do not own that set, the toad's description and statistics appear below.

ARMOR CLASS: *2*
HIT DICE: *3+1**
MOVE: *60' (20'*
ATTACKS: *1 bite plus* paralysis
DAMAGE: *1-6*
NO. APPEARING: *1-4 (1-4)*
SAVE AS: *Fighter 3*
MORALE: *7*
TREASURE TYPE: *V*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
XP VALUE: *75*

The cave or rock toad is about the size of a large dog. It carries a hard shell on its back, like a turtle, and has large, multifaceted eyes that shine with a hypnotic glow. Anyone gazing into these eyes must make a Saving Throw vs. Paralysis or be paralyzed for 2-8 rounds. Its normal attack is a bite from its sharp, beaked mouth.

The strange eyes of this creature continue to cast a feeble light in a 5' radius for 1-3 hours after the creature dies, but their hypnotic powers are lost. Cave toads usually live in cold regions.



9. Empty Area . . . For the Time Being.

> This cavern appears to be empty. The grinding sound continues to come from farther down the passage to the east, and now it is joined by the noisy clattering of stone on stone.

The above description assumes that the PCs enter this area *before* entering area 11. While the PCs are in area 11 fighting two caecilia and the gelatinous cube, a third caecilia bursts through the floor here, then squirms up behind the PCs to join the battle. If the party explores this room *after* fighting the monsters in area 11, all is quiet. They simply see the hole in the cavern floor where the third caecilia broke through.

10. Another Arachnid. This area may appear to be vacant at first, but a giant crab spider clings to the stony ceiling above the western entrance. Since this spider has the ability to blend into its surroundings, it surprises its prey on a roll of 1-4 on 1d6. Anyone bitten by the spider must make a Saving Throw vs. Poison (with a +2 bonus to the roll) or die in 1-4 turns.

Giant crab spider: AC 7; HD 2*; hp 10; MV 120′ (40′); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1-8 plus poison; Save F1; ML 7; AL N; XP 25; BD/38.

If the PCs have not yet battled the creatures in area 11, they hear the strange grinding noise and the clattering of rocks caused by the thrashing caecilia in the next cavern.

11. Big Worms and an Indigestible Treasure. Since the two caecilia worms in this cavern are so noisy, the party will have no chance of being surprised by the creatures. When the third caecilia joins the battle, however, and when the gelatinous cube squeezes out of its alcove, the DM should check for surprise as usual.

> Your view of this cavern is dominated by its occupants—two huge, bloated gray worms, each at least 30′ long with a monstrous tooth-filled maw capable of swallowing a person whole. The thrashing beasts scatter rubble everywhere as they move to attack.

At this point, adventurers who entered the area from the northwest tunnel hear a loud crash in the passage behind them. A third caecilia (35 hp) has burst through the floor in area 9 and will arrive in four rounds, ready to do battle.

Caecilia worms (3): AC 6; HD 6*; hp 36, 35, 27; MV 60′ (20′); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1-8; Save F3; ML 9; AL N; XP 500; ER/46. On an unadjusted to-hit roll of 19 or 20, a caecilia swallows its prey whole (Dmg 1-8 hp per round until freed).

Although the caecilia put up a good fight to defend their lair, they will retreat down their holes if they fail a morale check. PCs would be wise not to follow the fleeing worms, as their holes sometimes plunge straight down.

Once the PCs have dealt with the worms, they will find Hrothgar's treasure (or his treasure will find them!). A gelatinous cube was trapped behind some rubble in an alcove in the western wall (at the point on the map marked X) when the worms burst through the cavern floor. When the party finishes battling the caecilia, the cube squeezes out of its prison 2d8 rounds later and attacks. The PCs will be able to see the magical sword, the lion statuette, some

coins, and a few other items inside the shimmering cube as it approaches them.

> As you let out sighs of relief after dealing with the huge gray worms, the faint clatter of loose stone alerts you to another threat. A strange sight emerges from an alcove in the western wall: A magnificent sword, a silver statuette of a lion, and a few other small items are floating toward you, all contained within a shimmering, semitransparent cube.

Gelatinous cube: AC 8; HD 4*; hp 29; MV 60' (20'); #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 plus paralysis; Save F2; ML 12; AL N; XP 125; BD/30. Anyone hit by the cube must make a Saving Throw vs. Paralysis or be paralyzed for 2-8 turns. Any attack by the cube on a paralyzed victim automatically hits. The creature is immune to cold and lightning attacks.

The following is an inventory of the many items the gelatinous cube has picked up and been unable to digest during its long years of patrolling the lower caverns: 25 gp; 11 sp; 12 cp; a dagger; a suit of chain mail armor (minus the straps, which the cube dissolved); a few metal clasps and buckles from Hrothgar's other equipment; the barbarian's magical sword and silver statuette.

The sword has quite a few nicks in it but is still functional. It is indeed an intelligent sword, as the wizard Aeloros had speculated in his diary. Its name is Seeker, and it is a Neutral *sword +2* (Intelligence 9, Ego 12) with primary powers to *detect gems, detect metal,* and *see invisible objects.* It can communicate these powers to its wielder through empathy. Any Lawful or Chaotic individual who touches the sword suffers 1-6 hp shock damage for each round he is in contact with the blade. The first thing Seeker wants, of course, is a nice, new scabbard.

The statuette is made of solid silver and depicts a snarling lion on the prowl. Its eyes are inlaid rubies; its teeth and claws are ivory. Unfortunately, the gelatinous cube, in its years of constant scouring, has picked up and spit out the statuette so often that the silver sculpture has been badly scratched. In its present condition, the statue would fetch a price of 3,000 gp from the right buyer. If the ivory and rubies are removed and the silver melted down, the precious materials would be worth 1,000 gp and the silver 100 gp. The party's best option may be to have a skilled sculptor do some repair work on the piece (which would cost 100+10d10 gp), then resell it for about 5,000 gp.

Concluding the Adventure

When the PCs recover Hrothgar's lost treasure, the adventure is over. If the DM would like to send the PCs right out on another adventure, however, the intelligent sword, Seeker, can supply a rumor it learned from one of its previous owners. The DM will have to create the details of this rumor and an appropriate quest for the heroes. Ω

MARVEL

Continued from page 23

Before running an encounter with Mastermind, review the rules for disbelieving illusions on page 82 of the *Players' Book.* Heroes trying to disbelieve the illusions must make an Intuition roll against Mastermind's Unearthly-intensity images. Note that blind heroes or those with different sensory modes, such as Daredevil, still sense Mastermind's illusions (his mutant power affects the brain, not the actual sense organs). Androids and mechanical devices are unaffected by Mastermind's illusions.

Inner Circle treachery: Don't neglect the dramatic possibilities of forcing heroes to work with the White Queen or other Hellfire Club villains. Once Mastermind falls, an Inner Circle member may try to ambush and defeat a single hero. Treachery is their byword.

If the heroes aren't aware of the Inner Circle's secret powers, let the White Queen use all her charm on them, offer them honorary membership, and so on. The club can then use the heroes as dupes in a later scheme.

Aftermath

The police Special Weapons Force, unsure of what to do with Mastermind, locks him in a special invisibility-nullifying harness designed by Stane International. The harness has Remarkable Nullifying Power (*Players' Book,* page 76) with Feeble range and is made of Good-strength material.

Heroes familiar with Mastermind realize this equipment won't affect the mutant illusionist. If they aren't familiar with him or don't notice this, and don't accompany the police until the villain is locked in a psionically shielded prison cell, Mastermind easily escapes within hours.

If circumstances force an Inner Circle member to go public with his or her superhuman powers, the rest of the Inner Circle, pretending shock, expels the member publicly—but only publicly. The member will return to the Circle covertly or in another identity.

Karma

Karma should be awarded according to the Karma Summary Listing on page 37 of the *Players' Book.* Here are some possible Karma awards:

Detecting Mastermind's illusions: +5 Karma.
Deducing his presence and locating him: +10 Karma.
Defeating Mastermind: +100 Karma.
Stopping a violent crime: +30 Karma.
Multiple rescues (more than five people): +100 Karma.
Joining the Hellfire Club: +1 Popularity, -1 Karma.
Getting an Inner Circle member to betray his or her powers: +20 Karma per Circle member, to the hero who manages it (and undying enmity from that Circle member in the future!). Ω

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A ROSE FOR TALAKARA

BY WOLFGANG BAUR & STEVEN KURTZ

Red for love, white for purity, black for death.

Artwork by Mark Nelson

Wolfgang Baur recently completed writing the I.C.E. book Treasures of Middle-earth. *He is also an editor of* Visions *magazine, doing game reviews and interviews as well as the usual editing of manuscripts. Wolf has acquired a stylish if somewhat temperamental Karmann Ghia that he has named Cleo.*

Steve Kurtz is a 21-year-old graduate student at Cornell University, studying mechanical engineering. In addition to his studies and gaming, he devotes blood and sweat to Visions *magazine. As vice president of production, he is responsible for the design and content of this intercollegiate science-fiction magazine that is distributed on college campuses as far away as the Soviet Union.*

"A Rose for Talakara" is an AD&D® 2nd Edition adventure designed for 6-10 neutral- or good-aligned player characters of 8th-12th level (roughly 75 total levels). The party should be well balanced and include at least one experienced cleric and wizard. This module can be used independently or can be incorporated into any unexplored volcanic mountain range in an ongoing campaign. The adventure begins when all the party members are visiting a large city and going about their own business.

Adventure Background

In the distant past, the knight Agrovale fell from grace and became a skeleton warrior (see the FIEND FOLIO® tome, page 79, or the *Monstrous Compendium,* Vol. 4). His soul was trapped in a golden circlet by the forces of darkness and evil. Centuries later, a human wizard named Talakara devoted herself to Glasya, a powerful denizen of the lower planes. As a reward for Talakara's services, Glasya gave her the circlet that held Agrovale's soul. Apparently Glasya saw an opportunity to spread great evil throughout the world by giving Talakara some power and letting her ambition do the rest.

With her increasingly powerful magic and the undead might of Agrovale, Talakara easily gained control of Pandar, a small but rich kingdom cut off from the outside world by a daunting range of volcanoes. Instead of using her conquest of Pandar as a stepping stone to conquer the rest of the continent (as Glasya expected), Talakara began researching how to gain immortality. The frail and wrinkled state that lichdom offered didn't appeal to her (she was, after all,

extremely beautiful and vain). She wanted something more: to be feared and worshiped. She wanted to become a goddess. With the judicious use of powerful magicks to prolong her lifespan, Talakara embarked on the centuries-long task of destroying all other religions in her kingdom. Worship of Talakara became a national obligation.

None of this would have been possible were it not for Agrovale. Under Talakara's direct control, he singlehandedly murdered almost all the clerics and major nobles in Pandar. Agrovale loathed Talakara for dominating him through the circlet but agreed to serve her voluntarily so long as she did not use the circlet to enforce her commands. Talakara assented, and Agrovale has obeyed her for the past 120 years. Despite his obedience, however, the skeleton warrior has never lost his hatred and resentment of Talakara and her "religion."

Even when he could forget his enforced obedience to Talakara, Agrovale's existence has been a painful one. His imprisoned soul knows only restlessness and torment. After centuries in this tortured state, Agrovale has gradually become inured to pain, but only by keeping his mind busily occupied with events in the world outside Talakara's stronghold.

As years passed, he painstakingly assembled a spy network of undead shadows, not only throughout Pandar but also in the kingdoms beyond Pandar's borders. He began gardening again, a relaxing habit he had enjoyed as a mortal man, and has lovingly cultivated a garden of remarkable roses. Recently, through the reports of his shadow spies in a distant kingdom, Agrovale has been following the exploits of a particularly hardy and intelligent band of adventurers. The skeleton warrior has set in motion an elaborate plan that would release him not only from his forced allegiance to Talakara, but from his undead existence as well.

From his tireless shadow spies, Agrovale learned that the entire party of adventurers is visiting Aberdon (or any city that fits nicely into the DM's campaign), and he traveled there on Blackspike, his nightmare steed. Using his *cloak of shadows* (a special magical item described at area 72), the skeleton warrior gained access to Aberdon's most influential temple (that of any good-aligned deity in the DM's campaign). Before the high priest, Festivan, was to perform a private service for a small group of acolytes, Agrovale dropped a slow-acting poison, made from his black roses, into the incense burners and sacramental wines.

After Festivan and his acolytes had succumbed to the poison and fallen into a deathlike coma, the skeleton warrior threw the helpless high priest over his shoulder, left one black rose on the altar, and escaped using his *cloak of shadows* before the kidnapping was discovered. That evening, Agrovale paid street urchins to deliver packages to each of the PCs at their lodgings.

Starting the Adventure

The morning following the kidnapping of the high priest, the PCs each receive a small locked wooden box. The urchins who deliver the boxes know nothing about their contents but, for a small tip, can offer that they were paid for the service by a tall, spooky man in armor who wore a voluminous dark cloak. For an even larger sum, they add that they didn't see his face (he was wearing a great helm) but that his voice was soft and raspy. The urchins have no further information.

Each wooden box contains one of Agrovale's black roses (described in the Clues section) and a note that reads: "Meet me in the reserved room at the Garden Inn at noon today." The Garden Inn is located within a few blocks of the temple where Festivan was kidnapped (although there is no way the PCs could have learned of the crime so quickly). Should the PCs decide to keep the appointment, read or paraphrase the following section to the players:

> As you enter the common room of the Garden Inn, you immediately sense that something is amiss: the atmosphere in the inn is hostile, not warm and cheerful as usual. Six novice clerics in the corner are arguing loudly about the need for revenge. Two men at a table nearby are muttering, but all you hear is, "... and the only thing they found was a black rose on the altar." Your eavesdropping is interrupted by Jack the Hoe, the inn's tall, thin proprietor, who ambles up to you from the bar.
>
> "Greetings, milords, miladies. Your room is ready, though I must say that I have been busy this morning. It's a terrible tragedy and outrage, what happened last night. But if you need anything up there, give a ring and I'll answer as quick as I can."

If the PCs question Jack about the tragedy, he will tell them briefly that the high priest Festivan was kidnapped last night and a black rose was left in his place. Five acolytes were poisoned but were revived by other clerics in the temple once the foul deed was discovered. Jack is an unarmored, 0-level human with 5 hp. If attacked, he will attempt to escape and call for the town guards.

Jack leads the party upstairs to the largest room of his inn and returns downstairs. The room is well furnished but unoccupied. Once the entire party has assembled (or after a half-hour's wait, if some PCs have decided not to accept the invitation), Jack returns with a small square box and recites the following speech from memory:

> "My lords, I'm afraid the gentleman who invited you all here today will be unable to keep the appointment. He sends you his apologies and invites you to call on him at his home beyond the Firebogs at your earliest convenience. He also sends you this gift, a small token of his esteem."

Jack deposits the box on a small table in the room and waits for a small tip. Since he is also curious about what is in the box, he will not leave unless asked by the PCs. Jack can offer the following additional information:

> "Last night, a bit after midnight, a tall man in full battle armor walked into the inn. I looked up, since the entire room went quiet as soon as he walked in. He just stood there, still as a stone, by the door. I walked up, bade him good evening, and asked how I could help. He told me he wanted to hold a reunion in this room. He paid me handsomely, then gave me this box. 'I might not be able to make it to the reunion,' he said, 'but please give this present to my friends after they have arrived.' He made me learn the speech I gave just a minute ago, then he walked out and closed the door behind him. I realized he hadn't even told me his name. I went outside to call him back, but I couldn't find him. The night had just swallowed him up."

With some monetary encouragement, Jack can be prodded into remembering more details (he's a very observant fellow). The gentleman wore ancient armor—not plate mail, but full plate armor, dark gray with age and etched with intricate designs and runes in a foreign language. A beautiful, antique long sword with a carved golden hilt and a gem of some sort on the pommel hung at his side in a plain black scabbard. Jack also remembers feeling unsettled in the knight's presence and mentions that it was hard to hear the man's voice in the loud common room, since he spoke softly and his helm muffled what he said. Jack can recall one further conversation with the gentleman before he departed:

> "While he was teaching me his speech in the foyer, he was very patient with me, even though I was making all kinds of mistakes. A couple of local ladies—if you know what I mean—rose from the bar to leave, and to my surprise the gentleman stopped speaking and held the door open for the two of them. As they left—somewhat speechless, I might add, for the last time anyone held the door open for them was when I used to employ a doorman—he bowed stiffly to them and said, 'Good evening, ladies.'
>
> " 'Are you a knight, milord?' I asked him when they had left and he had closed the door.
>
> " 'I used to be,' he replied, and didn't say another word to me for several minutes.
>
> " 'Sir, are you all right?' I asked him, and right away he continued teaching me my speech as if nothing had happened."

The gentleman's gift is a locked but otherwise innocuous box containing a note and a simple clay urn with the name Festivan engraved on it. The urn contains fine gray ashes, and the note has a list of all the names of the PCs in the party. The list ends with the warning: "You are next." Routine divinatory spells quickly prove that the ashes are indeed all that remain of the kidnapped high priest. If any PCs cast *speak with the dead*, all that Festivan can recall is slipping quickly into darkness before he died.

If Jack is allowed to witness any part of this, he reports it to the town guards as soon as possible. Should this happen, a messenger arrives to escort the PCs to Festivan's temple where they are to meet with Portivel, the acting high priest.

The Temple and the Orb

Sooner or later, the PCs should visit Festivan's temple (good-aligned characters will want to return his ashes). There, they are recognized as adventurers and ushered into a private room to meet Portivel, the acting high priest (a 10th-level cleric). He is livid about the poisoning of the acolytes and the murder of Festivan, which he has learned about by *communing* with his deity. He also learned that the PCs have a chance to bring justice to the crime's foul perpetrator. The cleric announces that, through intense prayer, he has divined that Festivan's murderer dwells in a castle many days travel to the north beyond a volcanic mountain range.

Portivel offers a 10,000-gp reward to each PC if they bring the murderer to justice. He appeals to their sense of goodness, decency, and chivalry. If that fails, he raises the reward to 15,000 gp plus a large festival in their honor on their successful return.

If the PCs agree to undertake the quest, Portivel presents the party with a magical orb to help the PCs find their way. The device is crude (Portivel made it last night with a special spell granted by his deity) and consists of a corked, hollow glass sphere filled with white wine, the very wine with which Festivan was poisoned. Suspended from the cork by a platinum wire is a silver arrowhead tied to the stem of the black rose that Agrovale left on the altar. The arrowhead always points toward Talakara's castle. The divine blessing that powers the orb isn't permanent, however, and ends when successfully *dispelled* (against 10th-level magic) or if the orb is broken.

The Clues

Although Agrovale wants the PCs to travel to Talakara's castle, he has no idea that Portivel has provided the party with such a convenient means to his ends. Instead, the skeleton warrior has carefully constructed a web of hints that should lead clever PCs directly to Pandar, though some of these clues may take a bit of work to discover:

—The black roses are unlike any flower growing in the civilized southern kingdoms.

—Those smelling the roses or handling them with bare hands become sterile within one week (no saving throw). This sterilization is completely painless, however, and can be reversed by a *heal* spell. If a black rose is dried, its powder becomes a powerful sedative poison when burned and inhaled or when mixed in a liquid and imbibed (similar to pseudo-dragon poison: save vs. poison or fall into a deathlike coma for 1-6 days). Only powerful divinatory spells such as *legend lore, limited wish,* or *wish* can reveal the properties of the rose. *Contact other planes* and *commune* spells establish that the roses are poisonous and that they came from a distant kingdom far to the north, but nothing more specific. Another avenue to pursue for information about the roses is to consult a sage who has knowledge of botany, or else a druid. For an appropriate fee, the sage has a 60% chance to learn that the roses came from Pandar, a kingdom far to the north. Any druid of 3rd or higher level has a 100% chance to accurately identify the origin of the black roses.

—The urn and boxes received by the PCs were purchased by Agrovale in Aberdon the night of the kidnapping and murder. The list, the letters, and the note were all written by an ordinary scribe in Aberdon and dictated by the same mysterious gentleman. The scribe knows as little about his client as the urchins did.

—The most important information about Agrovale can be obtained from Jack the Hoe. Agrovale left a clear challenge for the party with the wiry bartender: "He . . . invites you to call on him at his home beyond the Firebogs. . . ." If the PCs miss this the first time, have this invitation echoed in the rumors circulating in the city. Agrovale sends each PC another black rose in two weeks if his spies tell him they are not preparing for the journey.

The PCs can hear various rumors circulating in the common rooms of the Garden Inn and other taverns they patronize. Mostly, these are rehashes of the information Jack already gave the party, as he is the source of many of the rumors about Agrovale. The PCs can hear all the available rumors in one day (roll 1d6 for every hour spent gathering information):

1. The kidnapping is a local knight's

revenge for Festivan's notorious affair with the knight's wife. (False. The high priest's affair with the lady is well known, but a true knight, as any chivalrous PC knows, would never stoop to using poison.)

2. Before he fell completely into a coma from the poison, one of the high priest's acolytes remembered seeing a black, shadowy creature carry off Festivan. (True)

3. Festivan was blasted out of existence by a death knight. (False. This is utter speculation by a friend of one of the poisoned acolytes, but it might cause the PCs to lose some sleep.)

4. The priesthood thinks that forces of evil from the lower planes are responsible for the disappearance of Festivan. (True)

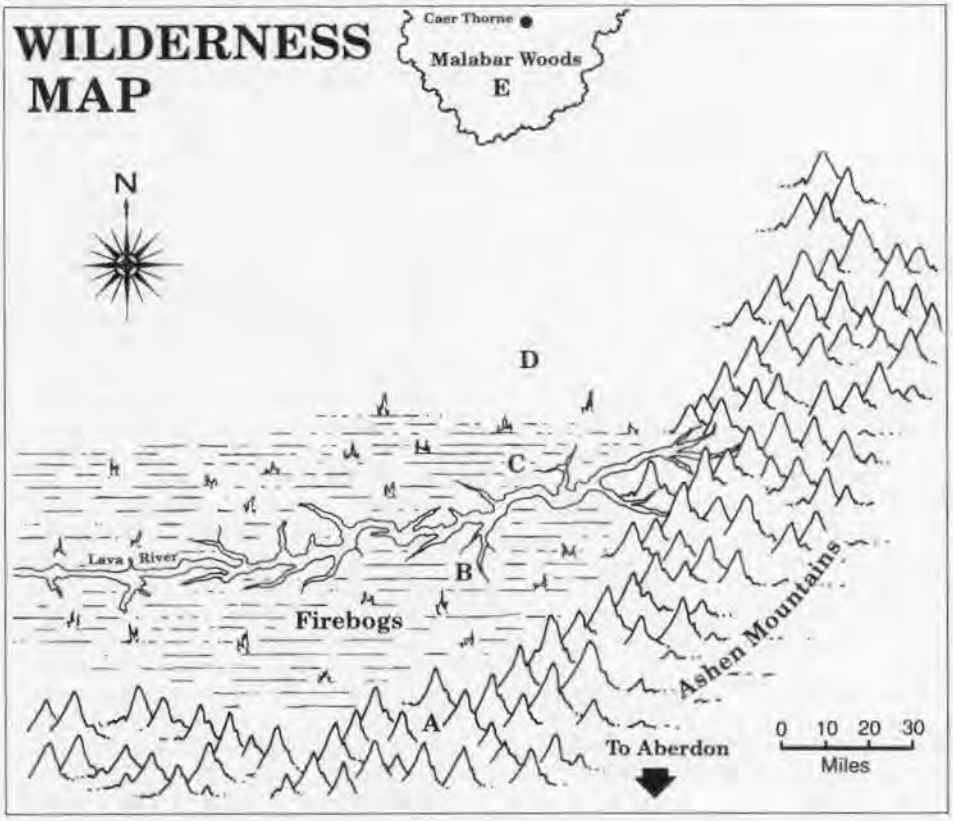
5. This is just another one of Festivan's practical jokes. (False)

6. The Aberdon thieves' guild is holding Festivan prisoner until his temple pays back all of its outstanding loans. (False. Festivan's temple is more than rich enough to buy whatever it needs; the thieves' guild connection is malicious rumor.)

At the DM's option, Portivel's orb can be eliminated from the module entirely. In any case, the DM should emphasize the detective aspects of the adventure, making the PCs rely on their wits to puzzle out the location of the Firebogs and Talakara's castle. The DM is also encouraged to make the PCs paranoid and trepidatious, perhaps by playing up the possibility that Agrovale is a death knight—or worse.

Getting There

To reach Pandar, the PCs must travel north over the Ashen Mountains. The trip covers 200 miles of difficult terrain in which active volcanoes have thrown up sharp rocks everywhere. There is little or no vegetation in the worst sections, and there is even an intermittently flowing river of lava leading into the Firebogs. Flying is impossible in some places because of the smoke and ash of the volcanoes that dot the region. Nevertheless, aerial travel will get the PCs to Pandar in nine days (three days of flying and six days on foot skirting the volcanoes). Ground travel takes a month and a half on foot, a week less if mules are used to transport the supplies. Horses cannot be used in this rough terrain.



Consult the Wilderness Map for the following set encounters on the way to Pandar.

A. Redbeard's Band.

You camp in a mildly volcanic part of the mountains. Ash occasionally covers the downwind slope of a crater, but there is no lava around. Steam vents and gusts of ash frequently confuse your infravision, but most of the terrain is clear enough. There isn't enough wood to make a real fire, but you do find some scrub that might burn well, if somewhat quickly. Given the volcanic vents and fires that light the slopes here and there for miles, one more blaze probably won't attract attention.

If the PCs build a fire to cook dinner, then post guards, they are able to get some decent rest. Around midnight, though, huge boulders might come flying out of the darkness at the sentries, and a pack of hounds will bay. Able to stay out of vision and infravision range because the adventurers' camp is illuminated, a band of fire giants has set up an attack with a minimal chance of failing to catch the adventurers off guard. Give the giants a bonus of +2 to their surprise roll. If the PCs have built no fire, the giants' chance to surprise is normal.

The four fire giants involved in this ambush were searching for prey in the mountains near the Firebogs when they stumbled across the PCs. Their leader, Redbeard, uses his hounds to keep the party in a state of maximum confusion while he and his compatriots throw heated boulders (additional 1-6 hp damage) from the cover of darkness. Characters using infravision have a 30% chance each round of being blinded or confused by plumes of hot volcanic gases.

Redbeard and his friends are ruthless hunters who were forced out of the hotter, better lands of the Firebogs by encroaching groups of salamanders. They have done quite well for themselves in the past generation despite their exile. Occasional groups of refugees from Pandar seeking sanctuary in the south provide an excellent food source. Still, the giants have not grown soft; life in the Ashen Mountains is never easy.

Though Redbeard won't admit it, part of his success can be attributed to the

four hell hounds he keeps for hunting. He also uses the pack to search out hidden thieves or characters who are trying to stay invisible. These hell hounds are trained to be excellent trackers and retrievers. They serve Redbeard faithfully and are willing to fling themselves between him and his enemies.

Hell hounds (4): Int low; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 6; hp 30 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA surprise, breathe fire; SD immune to fire, detect hidden/invisible creatures, less surprised; SZ M; ML 13; XP 659; MC.

The success of Redbeard's band depends on other factors besides the hell hounds. Redbeard is a very clever 4th-level shaman, and the other three members of the band have their own quirks as well. Redbeard's band is more like an adventuring party than a standard group of giants. They use hit-and-run tactics to bring down powerful prey, and they use some unusual strategies and items.

Redbeard himself is tough but short for a giant, a mere 15' tall. His beard is a huge scarlet explosion that covers him from eyeballs to chest. He uses his wits as much as his spells to keep his position as leader. Redbeard uses his *cure* and *aid* spells exclusively on himself and uses his *wyvern watch* spell to slow an enemy charge.

Redbeard (4th-level fire giant shaman): Int low; AL LE; AC –1; MV 12; HD 15+5; hp 80; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 2-20 +10; SA hurl rocks 3-200 yards for 2-20 hp, cast spells; SD resistant to fire; SZ H; ML 16; XP 12,000; MC; giant long sword; spells: *command, cure light wounds, sanctuary, aid, wyvern watch.*

Pekant is fairly weak for a fire giant and keeps himself alive through the use of stealth and trickery. He has learned to throw "daggers" the size of human long swords with +2 accuracy to hit at the rate of two per round. He wears a belt of 10 such blades and prefers them to throwing rocks, though his range is a mere 90 yards. If the situation calls for it, of course, or if he runs out of daggers, he can chuck boulders with the best of them. Pekant is always the first to run from danger and has a –1 morale modifier.

Pekant (fire giant): HD 15+2; hp 50; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 2-20 +10 or 1-8 +10; ML 14; XP 8,000; giant long sword, 10 giant daggers; other statistics as for Redbeard, but without spells.

Hiss, a perpetually fortunate giant, stumbled across a human's two-handed sword named Greenfire (+1, +2 vs. magic-using and enchanted creatures) some years ago and has been using it gleefully ever since. Since he can wield his blade one-handed, he also uses a giant *shield +1* to improve his defense. Hiss uses Greenfire to search out and destroy nasty wizards, priests, spell-using rangers, and especially paladins. He has a personal grudge against spell-casters because of a *Melf's acid arrow* that pierced his cheek long ago and made him unable to form any intelligible words; he can only hiss and gurgle. He will not, however, become a martyr to satisfy his bloodlust.

Hiss (fire giant): AC –3; HD 15+3; hp 75; THAC0 5 (4 or 3); Dmg 1-10 +11 or +12; XP 9,000; other statistics as for Redbeard, but without spells.

Chort, the fourth member of the band, distinguishes himself by wearing a great deal of black. This is not unusual in fire giants, but Chort will wear nothing else, even if this means wearing nothing at all. Chort is a brawler who hates waiting for the action to start. He is the least likely to retreat, even when the odds are against him.

Chort (fire giant): HD 15+4; hp 90; ML 18; XP 8,000; other statistics as for Redbeard, but without spells.

Redbeard carries the band's entire treasure: 3,830 sp and a jeweled snuffbox (worth 800 gp) full of deep brown chewing tobacco.

B. Lion in the Dust. Since ant lions are quite likely to surprise their victims, the following description assumes that the PCs have failed their surprise roll.

> You are walking down from the mountains across a region of foothills and ash-covered craters pocked by occasional vents of hot air from far below. Then, along the edge of one of the craters, the ground collapses and some of you fall into the hot, choking ashes.

This particular pit is the lair of an ant lion that adapted to the hotter conditions near the Firebogs. It attempts to grab and kill one PC, then vanishes into the tunnels beneath the ashes and dust that line its pit. If followed, it ducks out an escape tunnel. The ant lion has little treasure; a short sword with a keen edge and a heap of bones are all that remain of its most recent human and animal victims.

Ant lion, giant: Int animal; AL N; AC 2; MV 9, burrow 1 (in loose soil); HD 8; hp 52; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 5-20; SA grab; SZ L; ML 8; XP 1,400; MC.

C. The Firebogs.

> After coming down from the mountains you enter the Firebogs, a region of much-less-predictable vulcanism than the Ashen Mountains. A river of lava seems to flow through the broken ground, and eruptions of noxious gases are common. The ground often shifts treacherously under your feet, and wind-driven flames scour the stone for miles around. These fire vents are especially dangerous when the wind shifts. Fortunately, this miserable region is narrow; you could see the other side when you were up in the mountains.

Unfortunately, the PCs can't see the salamanders that lurk in the lava river. Five of these creatures leap out to attack, grinning and leaping about like spring-driven fireballs. They have a +1 bonus on their chance to surprise because of their sudden appearance.

Almost playful in their maliciousness, these five salamanders just love to make trouble, the rougher the better. Encountered in an especially fiery region near a lava flow, the salamanders attempt to wrap themselves around their foes and then dive into the lava with them. The salamanders succeed if they hit with their tails with a roll that is 4 or more above their normal to-hit score. Success results in 5-50 hp damage per round to unprotected victims, though the salamanders let go and swim off downriver as soon as they succeed. A strength or constitution check (victim's choice) is required to pull oneself out of the river.

The salamanders have little treasure, just their beautiful steel spears and a collection of 50 gems worth a total of 750 gp.

Salamanders (5): Int high; AL CE; AC 5/3; MV 9; HD 7+7; hp 39, 38, 37, 35, 31; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2-12 and 1-6; SA heat for bonus of 1-6 hp; SD +1 or better weapon to hit, immune to fire and other spells; SZ M; ML 13; XP 2,000; MC.

D. The Wizard's Flight. When the PCs emerge from the Firebogs, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> Leaving the sweltering Firebogs far behind, you follow the orb's direction along a dry riverbed. Looking north, you see a hint of green along the horizon. The vestiges of a narrow road lie beside the riverbed, and you can just barely discern a small hut in the distance, if you squint your eyes.
>
> An old man sitting under a stunted tree near the road puts down the apple he was munching on, picks up his staff, and approaches your party.

The old man, Rathmund, was instructed to wait beneath the twisted apple tree after he communed with Path, the manifestation of Nature in Pandar. Being a wise, experienced druid, he did not hesitate to obey the call of Nature. He has been sitting underneath the apple tree for two weeks, waiting for the adventurers to show up.

Rathmund is a revered member of a secret society, the Order of the Oak, that still venerates Path, though the worship of Talakara is the only sanctioned religion in Pandar. Agrovale has long known of the existence of this secret order but has left it alone as his own hatred of Talakara's worship has grown.

Rathmund: AL N; AC 8; MV 9 (due to age); D11; hp 62; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 8; S 8, D 12, C 9, I 13, W 17, Ch 16; staff, *ring of protection +2;* spells: *animal friendship, create water, entangle* (×2), *magical stone, pass without trace, remove fear, barkskin, flame blade, goodberry, heat metal, speak with animals, trip, hold animal, protection from fire, snare, summon insects, tree, neutralize poison, speak with plants, tongues, commune, wall of fire, stone tell.*

The druid greets the party in a foreign language. As soon as it becomes clear that they cannot communicate, Rathmund casts a *tongues* spell to converse with the leader of the party. He is gregarious and will talk to even the most recalcitrant of adventurers (he was having a rather heated conversation with the apple tree when the party arrived). The druid especially loves to hear a good story and has many of his own to tell. When the *tongues* spell wears off, Rathmund enthusiastically continues trying to communicate with the PCs in any way possible, but his dialect of Common is too bizarre for PCs to understand without prolonged exposure. Should the PCs attack him, Rathmund changes form into a falcon and flies away, never to be encountered again in this adventure.

With a bit of persuasion, Rathmund can be convinced to guide the party north to the forest—in the morning. For the evening, he guides the party down to his spartan cottage by the river for dinner and rest. There, Rathmund attempts to communicate using sign language and mimicking (it might be fun for PCs to use this as an opportunity to play charades), and he tries to teach party members Pandar's version of Common. PCs with intelligence scores over 14 will be able to pick up basic Pandar Common in 6-48 hours if the druid teaches them. The main differences between the PC's language and the tongue of Pandar are in pronunciation and nouns. (Imagine an American trying to understand a native Scotsman for the first time. Both are speaking the same language, but pronunciation and nouns vary between the two.)

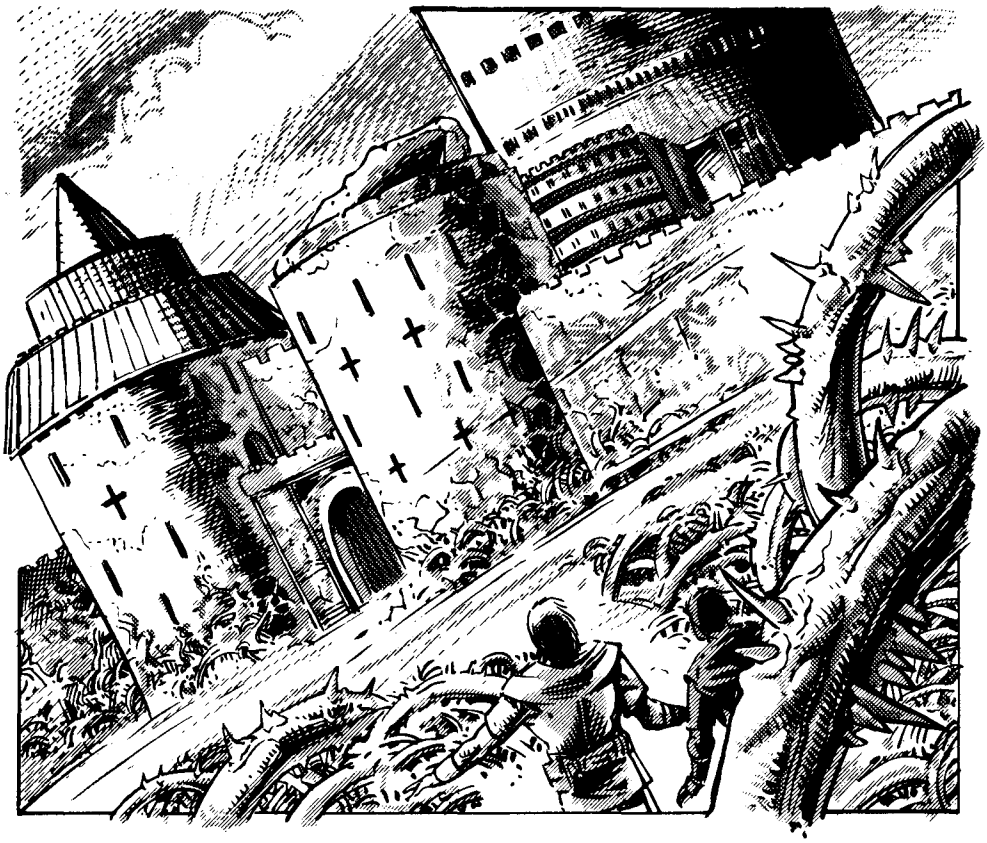
After Rathmund and the PCs are able to communicate with some degree of fluency, the druid inquires about the party's origin and purpose, and is particularly interested in any stories about the party's previous adventures. After telling some amusing tales about his own life—most of them are about his conversations with boulders and alder trees—Rathmund asks the PCs if they have ever heard the story of how the road on which they were traveling got its name. As the PCs have probably never heard this story, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> "Once upon a time, over 160 years ago, the Goddess arrived in Pandar. For a year she traveled the kingdom in the disguise of a seeress, learning about our priests, rulers, and wizards. Then, at our yearly spring festival, she presented herself to the king and prophesied that the kingdom would be destroyed: 'First the wizards, then the priests, then the rulers. And after the terror, the Goddess will come.' Needless to say, her prophesy wasn't very well received, but before the king could have his guards capture her and cut out her tongue, the seeress vanished.
>
> "Sure enough, the very next day Pandar's wizards began to disappear. Rumors began to surface that the Goddess had appeared in a vision to all the wizards in the kingdom and warned them to leave or be destroyed. At first, no one much noticed or cared (we had always been more of a gods-fearing nation than a magic-fearing one), but soon scouts reported that wizards were flying south across the Firebogs and not returning.
>
> "Two decades passed quietly, and people forgot the seeress's prophesy and that they had ever depended upon wizards. Well, they almost forgot. This road, which leads from the Home of the Goddess to the Firebogs, was afterward called the Wizards' Flight in their dubious honor."

The druid knows countless more equally informative anecdotes. If the PCs ask about the fulfillment of the seeress's prophesy, or if the PCs mention the black roses and their connection with the murder of Festivan, Rathmund turns pale and continues his previous tale:

> "As I said earlier, things were quiet for some time after the wizards departed. Then the twenty dark years began. Priests and nobles were hacked to death in their sleep right in their homes, castles, and temples by an invincible monster. Then, as she herself had prophesied, the Goddess began to appear throughout the kingdom, promising a few nobles safety from horrible death if they worshiped her. Those that agreed were spared; those that didn't were murdered. But now the murders were of a different nature. Before, the victims had been brutally chopped to pieces in terrifying but obviously mindless acts of destruction.
>
> "Soon, however, victims began disappearing from their beds at night. A small wooden box would be delivered by a young peasant child to the victim's residence in the morning. The box invariably contained a single black rose and a small urn filled with the victim's ashes. This was a much more dreadful form of death: It was mysterious, calculating, and precise."

Rathmund will not want to discuss the subject of roses with the PCs for some time after relaying this last information. Under no circumstances will the druid escort the party any farther than the



edge of the Malabar Woods. After thanking the PCs for an interesting journey and wishing them good luck, Rathmund returns to his hut and resumes his conversation with the apple tree.

E. The Malabar Woods. These woods near the southern edge of Pandar rise from a tangle of fallen trees, moss, vines and undergrowth to a height of well over 100′. The predominant trees are red cedars decked with trailing moss, but hemlock and fir also survive on the edges of the forest and in the glens where cedars have fallen. The forest floor is extremely uneven due to small streams, gullies, and fallen logs that form barriers 10′ high and up to 100′ long. Sections of the forest are as difficult to negotiate as a swamp because of the slippery footing in rotten areas where the ground is a webwork of roots, moss, ferns, and small shrubs. Ordinary inhabitants of the woods include loud croaking tree frogs, fat banana slugs up to a foot long, wild boars, ravens, spotted owls, and small snakes.

The Malabar Woods are universally shunned by the citizens of the realm as unwholesome and dangerous. This general perception is correct, since Talakara deliberately encourages certain monsters to live in the area. Since the death of the monarchs of Pandar roughly 140 years ago, the wet and fairly warm (due to the Firebogs' proximity) conditions have allowed a wide range of monsters to flourish there unchecked. Whenever the PCs are passing through or camping in the forest, one of the following encounters occurs (roll 1d8):

1. **White serpents** (1-4): Int animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 15; HD 2+1; hp 15, 10, 8, 7; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison; SZ S; ML 8; XP 175; MC (snake, poison, normal). These specially bred snakes are the work of Talakara's cult and live throughout the woods. Except for their unusual color, they are normal poisonous snakes with poison that causes incapacitating sickness for 1-4 days within 2-8 rounds of injection if a save vs. poison at –1 is not made. These snakes enjoy warming themselves in empty boots or cooling campfire ashes, and attack only exposed flesh. There are enough such snakes that the party can encounter them any number of times.

2. **Spiders, huge** (3-6): Int animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 18; HD 2+2; hp 18, 14, 11, 10, 9, 6; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA surprise, poison; SZ M; ML 8; XP 270; MC. These inhabitants of the outer rim of the forest are reddish-black and slightly furry. They can leap up to 30′ from concealed tunnels when attacking. There is no limit to the number of times these huge spiders may be encountered.

3. **Trolls** (12): Int low; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 43, 39, 36, 35, 33 (×2), 32, 29 (×2), 27, 24, 21; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 5-8/5-8/5-12; SA hit three opponents; SD regeneration; SZ L; ML 14; XP 1,400; MC. Talakara permits a few trolls to roam her forest because they provide a ready source for potion ingredients. This particular band is led by Tima, their shaman/chieftain, whose spells are from the spheres of Sun and Charm. The trolls who follow her are all loyal in a brutal sort of way. When all 12 have been slain, treat this result as no encounter.

The trolls' lair is a roughly dug hole that contains a small hoard of 1,300 gp. A dangerous encounter could occur if the party walks across the stick-and-leaf-covered opening of the troll-hole; they are 75% likely to fall through the leafy door. If the PCs tumble into the troll den like this, the trolls' chance of surprise increases by 2.

Tima (troll shaman/chieftain): P7; hp 48; Dmg 5-8/5-8/5-12; other statistics as for normal trolls, plus SA/SD spells; spells: *command, cause fear, darkness, enthrall, hold person* (×2), *continual darkness* (×2), *cloak of fear.*

4. **Harpies** (1-20): Int low; AL CE; AC 7; MV 6, fly 15 (C); HD 7; hp 43, 41, 39, 38, 37, 36, 35, 34 (×2), 33 (×2), 32, 31, 30, 29, 28, 27, 25, 23, 21; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA singing and *charm;* SZ M; ML 13; XP 1,400; MC. These harpies are occasionally hunted and plucked by Agrovale to provide quills for his mistress's scrolls (but they are not the same harpies that lair at Caer Thorne). They gleefully harass flying PCs.

5. **Shadow:** Int low; AL CE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 16; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5 + special; SA strength drain; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; SZ M; ML special; XP 650; MC. Agrovale's spy will not reveal itself to the party but immediately informs its master of the PCs' arrival. See "The Inner Castle" for more information.

6. **Shambling mounds** (1-2): Int low; AL N; AC 0; MV 6; HD 10; hp 56, 50; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 2-16/2-16; SA surprise, suffocation; SD immune to fire and crushing weapons, half damage from cold and edged/pointed weapons; SZ L; ML 18; XP 5,000; MC. Usually, these big pets of Talakara cannot find enough food for themselves within the castle, so they spend much of their time roaming the forest. If slain here, they will not be encountered in area D of Caer Thorne's outer ward.

7. **Skeleton guard patrol** (15): See "Caer Thorne" for statistics. Mounted on phantom steeds, this patrol is Talakara's way of keeping down the forest populations of elves, birds, boars, and other wholesome creatures. The skeleton guards approach any intruders and escort them to the keep for questioning. If shown any resistance, the 15 skeleton soldiers try to destroy their attackers.

The guards' phantom steeds are skeletal mounts with moldering tack and harness, filed teeth, and pointed steel shoes. Although they are fearsome looking, these phantom steeds lack the mass to make their attacks as dangerous as those of real horses. They are quite nimble, however, and are good jumpers from long practice in the woods.

Skeletal horses (15): Int non; AL N; AC 7; MV 18; HD 3; hp 15 each; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-3; SD cannot be turned, half damage from edged weapons, spell immunities; SZ L; ML special; XP 175; MC (unique; see Skeleton, animal).

8. **Criosphinx** (1): Int average; AL N; AC 0; MV 12, fly 24 (D); HD 10; hp 41; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/2-8/3-18; SZ L; ML 16; XP 5,000; MC. This poor beast is following up on a (false) rumor of a gynosphinx in the area. The criosphinx can easily be talked into leaving the party alone if given a large bribe or if given phony information about the location of a gynosphinx.

Caer Thorne

Once through the Firebogs and pointed in the right direction by Rathmund, the party should have no difficulty making its way through the Malabar Woods. Talakara's castle, Caer Thorne, is in the center of the woods and at first glance appears to be deserted. Caer Thorne was a stronghold and hunting retreat for the monarchs of Pandar over a century ago, but after Talakara's destruction of the aristocracy, she assumed ownership and added the castle's magical defenses. The fortress has been decaying beautifully ever since.

There are no wandering monster encounters in Caer Thorne. The skeleton soldiers who serve there were created by Talakara and placed under Agrovale's command. They all have the same statistics and will not leave their posts unless given special instructions by Agrovale. References to these creatures are in boldfaced type where they are encountered.

Skeleton soldiers: Int non; AL N; AC 3; MV 6; HD 5; hp 30 each; THAC0 15 (14); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit, +2 to damage due to training by Agrovale; SD cannot be turned, half damage from edged weapons, cold and spell immunities; SZ M; ML special; XP 420; plate mail, long sword.

Caer Thorne is completely dominated by its keep; the central tower is huge, as tall as the castle is wide. The keep is protected by two sets of outer defenses: an outer ward of low walls and towers, and an inner stronghold of much higher walls, towers, and battlements. In addition, the ground for several hundred yards around the castle is bare except for withered yellow grass and an occasional stunted tree. Movement around the castle for at least 300 yards is easily spotted from the walls. Across the barren zone, the next defense is the outer ward, a set of low walls and small towers that are dwarfed by the central tower. The outer walls are overgrown with vines in spots, and a few soldiers march along the battlements, keeping watch. The outer gatehouse, the only apparent entry to the fortress complex, is in reasonably good repair, although there is a gaping hole in the northern roof.

Beyond the gatehouse and the outer defenses lie the inner ward's tall buildings and towers, huge enough to approach the keep in grandeur. There are fewer crumbling walls, towers and battlements around the inner ward. Watchmen's helmets are visible over the battlements.

The keep itself is at least 100' high, perhaps more. The building is topped with a set of crenations and a flat roof more than large enough to accommodate ballistas and catapults. The keep is faced in flat gray stone and not pierced by any windows or arrow slits. It is flanked by a smaller square tower that seems to lean against it for support.

The flanking tower bristles with protection for the keep: at least seven arrow slits and a flat top suitable for catapults or ballistas.

The Gatehouse

The main entrance to Caer Thorne is a heavily fortified gatehouse guarded by a human captain, a human lieutenant, 12 skeleton soldiers, and a manticore. Because the captain of the guard is intelligent and desperately eager to please Talakara, Agrovale has not told him to allow the PCs free passage through the outer gate, for fear of revealing his plan to Talakara. The skeleton soldiers elsewhere in the fortress, however, have been commanded not come to the aid of those at the gate, should the PCs start a battle there.

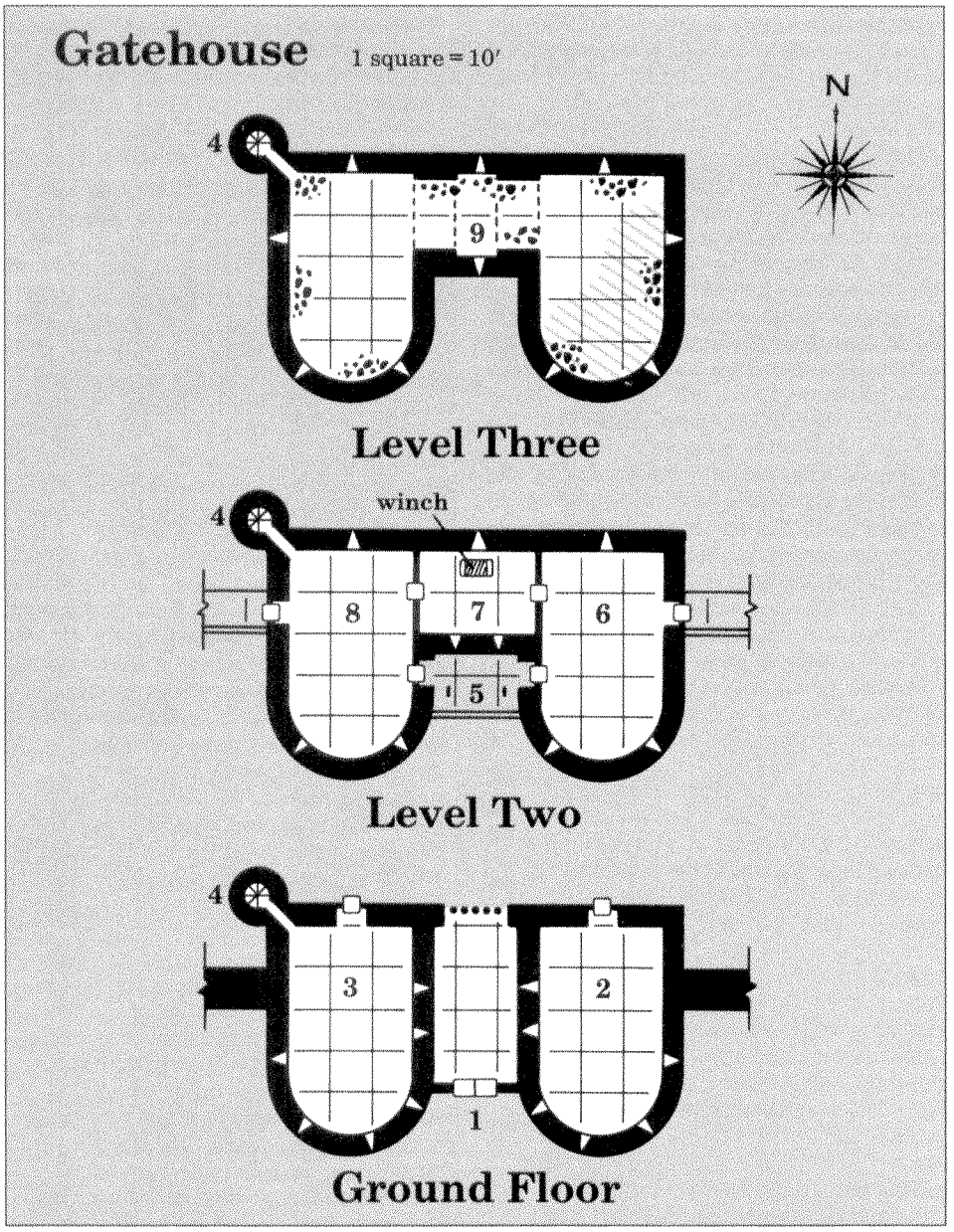
1. Gate.

> The main gate, a massive iron-reinforced portal, is firmly shut before you. You can see the helmets of two skeleton soldiers on the machicolated balcony above the gate. The gatehouse bristles with arrow slits and battlements, but no skeletons seem to be standing atop the roof. You can see crossbows at the ready in the windows, presumably where more soldiers wait.

The gate here is kept closed against intruders and is barred from the inside. If the party approaches, one of the two **skeleton soldiers** on the balcony notifies the captain of the guard in area 6.

Terrekal is a minor mage who has been appointed captain of the gatehouse guard. Originally one of Talakara's apprentices, Terrekal fell from his mistress's grace last year when he accidentally caused an explosion in her laboratory, destroying an elaborate experiment she was conducting. He was strongly reprimanded by Talakara (his cracked ribs have healed only recently) and sent to the gatehouse until further notice. Terrekal commands the skeleton soldiers and his lieutenant, Dorevar, though his hold over the latter is sometimes shaky.

Terrekal: AL LE; AC 6; MV 12; W8; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA/SD spells, magical items; ML 11; XP 3,000; D 18, I 16; spells: *charm person* (×2), *protection from good, spider climb, detect invisibility, ESP, invisibility, dispel magic, Melf's*



minute meteors, suggestion, wall of fire (×2). In his belt pouch, Terrekal carries a potion of *extra-healing* for use in a dire emergency. He always carries a *wand of magic missiles* (30 charges) for use against enemy spell-casters.

Terrekal challenges the party from the balcony and asks them their business in Caer Thorne. If the party leader says that they have business with Talakara, the Goddess of Pandar, or Agrovale, Terrekal will open the gate for a small fee (50 gp per person). If the party attacks once the gate is opened, the portcullis is lowered to split the group in half, and the gatehouse soldiers in areas 2, 3 and 7 do their best to exterminate the intruders. If a battle erupts, the manticore in area 9 does its best to destroy wall-climbers (or at least hit them with enough missiles to make them fall off) and other stragglers.

Terrekal's tactics include first casting an *invisibility* spell, then summoning Dorevar from the lieutenant's room (area 8) to defend the gate. Terrekal then casts a *wall of fire* spell over the gate entrance to split the party in two or prevent their escape. At this point, he may use his wand or cast *charm person* and *suggestion* spells.

Dorevar is less subtle than Terrekal. If he hears fighting or is summoned by the captain, he descends from the second level to room 3, taking along three guards for extra protection, and attacks any intruders with his bastard sword.

Dorevar is an outlaw from the wilds of Pandar who saw his chance in serving Talakara. He has crushed opposition to her rule among his own people without remorse. His short temper will be the death of him if he ever meets an opponent he can't outfight.

Dorevar: AL NE; AC –1; MV 9; F8; hp 63; THAC0 13 (12); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; S 18/12; D 16; C 15; ML 15; XP 1,400; *plate mail +2,* bastard sword.

2. Crossbows. The four **skeleton soldiers** in this room will respond only if the gate is rushed or if the PCs attempt to ambush the gatehouse while passing through. Once the party is split in two, the skeletons concentrate their fire on the back ranks, wall-climbers, and flying opponents. Each of the skeletons is armed with a light crossbow and a long sword. Missile attacks against the archers are at –10 to hit because of the difficulty of hitting targets behind arrow slits. The door opening to the inner ward is locked at all times.

3. More Crossbows. These four **skeleton soldiers** are under the same orders as those in area 2. Should Dorevar descend from the second level to attack PCs beyond the gate, he takes three of these soldiers with him and leaves one to lock the door to the outer ward behind him.

4. Spiral Stairs. These stairs connect the three levels of the gatehouse, but the top of the stairs (leading to the manticores' lair) is blocked by a 15'-long mass of rubble that would take hours to shift. The stairs wind upward in a clockwise direction and are narrow enough to allow only single-file ascent.

5. Balcony. Two **skeleton soldiers** armed with light crossbows stand guard here, watching for approaching visitors or intruders. They immediately notify Terrekal (in area 6) of anything unusual and remain to guard him once he arrives.

6. Captain of the Guard's Chamber. Terrekal lives simply but well, with a wooden bed and fresh linen sheets, oak

chest, and rich rugs. In addition, he has a fine ash washstand with an enamel pitcher and basin (suitable for hurling at intruders for 1-3 hp damage), a portrait of himself, and a bookshelf that covers one wall from floor to ceiling.

The mage's spell book rests on a heavy iron writing stand that will animate to attack anyone who approaches it, other than its master or Talakara. The writing stand is ornately carved and rests on four lion's feet. It rears up on its two hind legs when attacking with its front legs. Under no circumstances will the book be dropped, nor can it be removed or damaged while the stand is still "alive."

The spell book contains the spells that Terrekal has memorized plus *shocking grasp, burning hands, light, magic missile, forget, wizard lock,* and *phantom steed.*

Animate writing stand: Int non; AL N; AC –1; MV 6; HD 8; hp 64; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2-12/2-12; SD immune to fire, cold, any mind-affecting spell; SZ L; ML 20; XP 2,000.

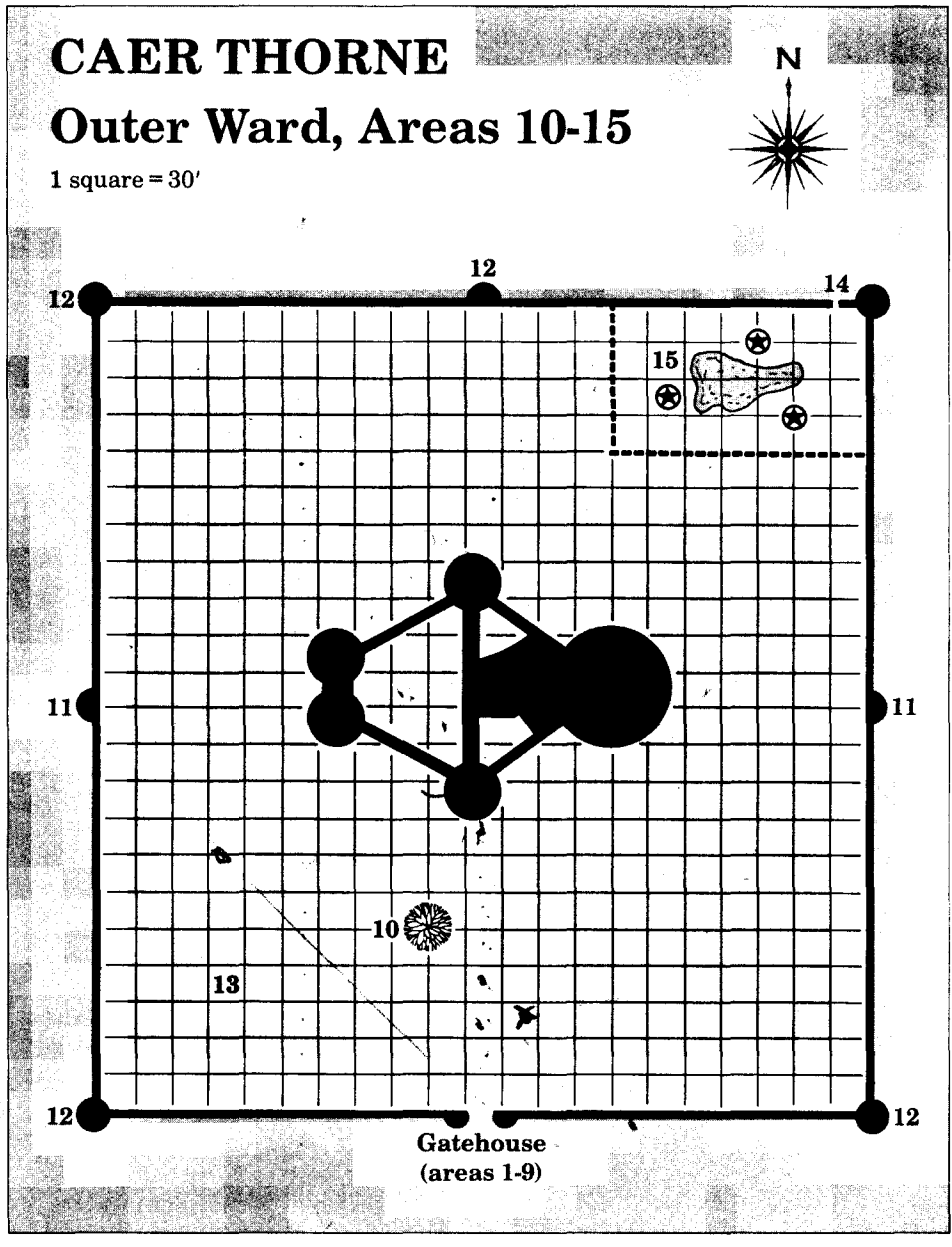
7. Winch Room and Murder Holes. Two **skeleton soldiers** operate the portcullis here and have stones and boiling and flaming oil to attack anyone trapped between the portcullis and the gate. They can inflict 6-60 hp damage per round (save vs. breath weapon for half damage). Missiles attacks against the skeletons are at –10 to hit because of their protected position.

8. Lieutenant's Quarters. These spartan quarters contain little more than a narrow bunk, a shield leaning against the wall, a table with a loaf of bread, and two long benches. Dorevar can be found napping in his bunk unless summoned by Terrekal.

9. Former Barracks. This ruined hall is now the home of a manticore that will not trouble the party unless there is a disturbance on the outer walls or in the inner ward. If the PCs are caught in a fight with skeleton soldiers, the manticore climbs to the gatehouse battlements through a hole in the roof directly over the room most distant from the stairwell. It fires all its tail spikes to strafe wizards and others behind the general melee, then joins in the battle.

While on the battlements, the manticore has a +4 bonus to its armor class when attacked by archers at ground level due to 50% cover. If the PCs are mounted, the creature will wait until the horses are left behind, then attack the mounts. The manticore considers the harpies who live in the outer ward (area 10) to be beneath its contempt and will never help them.

Within the musty attic that the manticore has converted to its lair are yards and yards of soft cloth that it uses for bedding, and a foul mound of bones, hide, and other refuse. A pouch containing 100 pp lies among the bedding.



Manticore: Int low; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12, fly 18 (E); HD 6+3; hp 35; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-8; SA 1-6 tail spikes for 1-6 hp each; SZ H; ML 14; XP 1,400; MC.

The Outer Ward

Talakara has allowed the outer ward to fall into decay. Agrovale is the only one who attempts to keep the defenses viable. The walls themselves are 20' high, and their towers stretch to 30' with flat roofs. A single patrol of four **skeleton soldiers** walks past any given point on

the walls every 15 minutes (walking clockwise entirely around the outer ward), so sneaking over is relatively easy. The postern gate (area 14) is unguarded by the skeleton soldiers who keep an eye on the main gate and walls.

The plants growing on the east and southeast walls have resisted even the most determined efforts to eradicate them. Within the outer walls, the grounds are clear and wet except for hedges surrounding the garden in the northeast corner. The southwest corner is the boggiest, and the northeast corner the driest. A single dead tree provides the only break in the otherwise empty southern half of the grounds.

Through the use of a *ring of wishes,* Talakara has negated the effect of *passwall, disintegrate, dimension door, teleport,* and similar spells if they are used to gain entrance to the castle by anyone other than herself. These spells can be cast as normal within the bounds of the castle but have no effect; the spell is simply wasted. If cast from outside the outer ward, such a spell will bring the caster right up to the wall but not within the castle proper. Only Talakara can use these spells in her own castle.

10. Harpy Tree.

> Within the outer ward you see a barren tree surrounded by bones, feathers, and refuse. The smell reaches you from yards away. The tree creaks under the weight of the winged birdwomen perched in it, and the air is filled with their shrieks and the whirl of their wings as they take to the air.

A pack of 10 harpies nests in this dead tree. They are not really part of Talakara's following, but she and her priests allow the harpies to stay within the outer ward in exchange for keeping the region relatively free of animal life. If the party attacks the castle repeatedly or arrives by air, the harpies may go on aerial strikes or reconnaissance against the PCs. The harpies consider the manticore (area 9) as foul as any enemy. They have no treasure.

Harpies (10): Int low; AL CE; AC 7; MV 6, fly 15 (C); HD 7; hp 39, 35, 33, 32, 31, 30, 29, 28, 25, 21; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA singing and *charm;* SZ M; ML 14; XP 1,400; MC.

11. Harpy Towers. These two towers are both lairs for roughly similar flocks of harpies. They are gutted, dark holes, with harpies perched on the beams and rafters that once supported the floors. Each tower also has a harpy lookout, who will rally her companions to join her if she sees food is coming. The towers' harpies are fairly friendly with one another and are part of the same pack, but there is fierce competition between the tower harpies and the tree harpies (area 10). Each group tries to be first to get to visitors; there are often quarrels over dead prey, with the tree and tower groups deciding the issue by having a gruesome tug-of-war with the bodies.

The **tower harpies** (hp 34, 33 (×3), 32 (×2), 31, 30, 29, 27, 25, 24, 22, 18; other statistics as listed in area 10) are slightly smaller than the tree harpies but make up for this by being more numerous; seven nest in each of the towers. The bottom of the western tower holds several valuable items under the layers of debris: 2,300 sp in three large sacks, and a 400-gp amethyst in the pocket of a torn green silk jacket left from the days before Talakara's renovations.

12. Guard Towers. These four towers are each manned by four **skeleton soldiers** with light crossbows. The soldiers fire at anyone they see outside the walls but will not come to each other's aid, on Agrovale's orders. They use their swords to fend off anyone coming over the walls.

13. Gardeners. A mated pair of shambling mounds patrols the wetter portion of the castle grounds (these are the same ones on the random encounter table in area E). They joined Talakara's coterie when she cast a *charm plant* spell on them. Even after the spell wore off, the shamblers stayed for the rich pickings of the Malabar Woods and the safety of the outer ward. In their spare time, they are the gardeners of Caer Thorne, pruning and eating molds, fungi, dead leaves, weeds, bugs, and small mammals within the castle grounds.

Deep in their bog, the pair buried (and thus preserved) the body of a Talakaran initiate who sought to flee the temple by night, carrying several items from the treasury with him: a *short sword +2* in a jeweled scabbard worth 500 gp, 700 gp in coin, and an emerald worth 500 gp. This bog is often torn up, since Natasha (see area 15) also uses it for fertilizer.

Shambling mounds (2): Int low; AL N; AC 0; MV 6; HD 10; hp 56, 50; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 2-16/2-16; SA surprise, suffocation; SD immune to fire and crushing weapons, half damage from cold and edged/pointed weapons; SZ L; ML 18; XP 5,000; MC.

14. Postern Gate. Completely overgrown with vines and ivy, this section of wall is indistinguishable from the rest of the outer defenses. Hidden within the thick coating of leaves and tough wood is an ancient gate, built to provide an exit for sallies during sieges. It can be opened by magic or smashed open as if it were a locked door. The postern gate is perfectly visible from the inside of the wall but still requires a check to open.

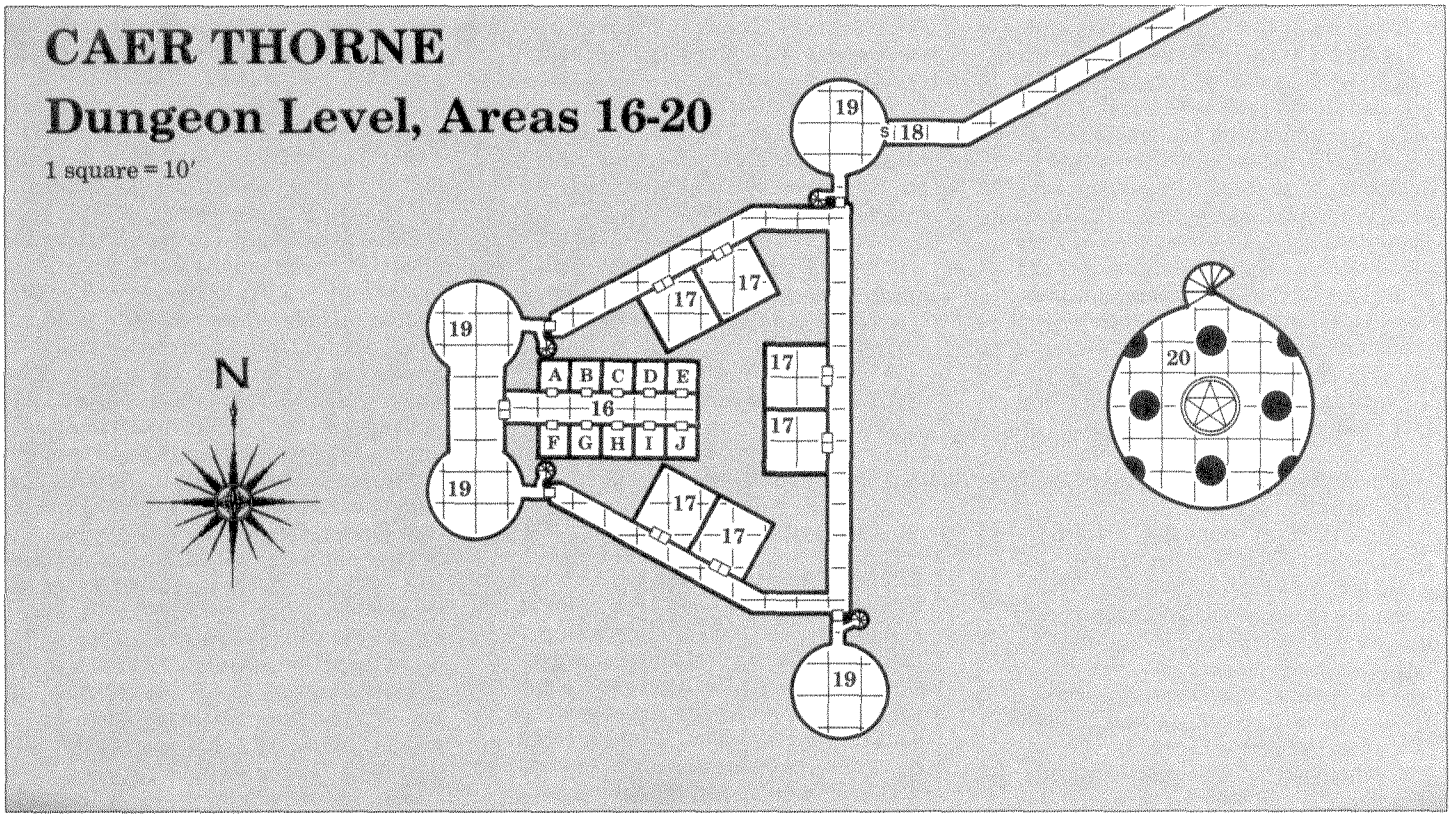
15. Medusa's Garden.

> This corner of the outer ward seems to be very well cared for. There are neatly clipped hedges, a pond full of goldfish, and even a few weathered marble statues. Everywhere along the hedges are roses: black, white, red, and yellow. The bushes are carefully pruned, and their roots are thoroughly mulched with what appears to be peat-moss and bone meal. There are several ways you could go farther into the garden. The layout is formal and blocks some views, but it isn't a maze.

This is where Agrovale's black roses bloom, watched over by a greater medusa who is loyal to him. The black rose native to Pandar is called Maiden's Ransom because it causes sterility when handled. The black roses' abilities are described in the "Clues" section at the beginning of the adventure.

The white roses that grow in the garden are known as Oldman's Treasure. When handled, these roses act as a *cure disease* spell. The white roses can be used to make a sleeping poison (save at –4 or fall asleep for 1-10 hours) or can be powdered and burned for the same effect. Agrovale developed the Oldman's Treasure strain of roses by crossing his black roses with nightshade, but the resulting white roses are sterile and can be propagated only by cuttings. Talakara uses them in her potions of *longevity.*

Deep red and pale yellow roses add a touch of color here as well, but they are simply excellent strains, beautiful but without magical effects. They do add their thorns to the hedges, however, and anyone trying to cut or force his way



through will take 1-2 hp damage per 5′ of hedge.

The three fine statues here are all of white marble with veins of gray. The greater medusa that watches over the blooms has spent years in perfecting the art of petrification and considers these marbles to be her finest works. One is of a rearing stag, the second is a dancing maiden, and the third is a gnomish jester. These are all pieces from the early part of Talakara's reign. Later victims were turned to granite, limestone, basalt, and even brittle shale, but these inferior statues have been broken up and thrown into the pond in the center of the garden to conceal them.

The gardening medusa's name is Natasha. She is a vain creature who wears robes of dark purple to hide her serpent's lower body. Natasha lives in the corner tower, which is otherwise abandoned. Originally the ruler of the Malabar Woods, Natasha made an alliance with Talakara, moved into these better quarters, and has enjoyed a quiet life ever since. She is an expert musician and owns a set of *pipes of haunting.*

Natasha (greater medusa): Int very; AL LE; AC 3; MV 12; HD 8; hp 33; THAC0 13; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1-4; SA petrification, poison, missiles; SD poisonous blood; MR 20%; SZ M; ML 14; XP 4,000; short bow with 13 arrows (save vs. poison at –1 or die); MC.

Lighting for Natasha's tower is provided by several holes in the roof, and the medusa has hung sheets on the drafty top floor, making the inside a mass of shifting, flickering spots of light. This is disorienting enough, but the floor is also covered with rubble, and the stairs up and down are missing several risers. Natasha gains a bonus of +2 on surprise and to-hit rolls inside. In the garden, Natasha slithers around the maze of hedges using her bow and poisoned arrows to pick off intruders. Often, she remains out of sight and plays her pipes to terrify henchman and gain a surprise advantage. Her treasure is in the tower basement in a chest before the secret door to area 18. The treasure includes 1,055 sp and a potion of *clairaudience.*

Dungeon Level

16. Cell Block. Guarded by a djinni, the cell block is a wet and dismal place, full of the smell of molds and mushrooms. In fact, the shambling mounds come here from time to time to graze on the exceptionally fine slime. The djinni warden is named Marwan al Ibn, and he is less than delighted by his mistress, Talakara. In fact, the djinni will be extremely helpful to any party that does not attack him. He reacts with force only if someone attempts to open one of the cells; this is how he interprets his orders to guard the dungeon against intruders. Even then, he first interposes himself between the PCs and the cell door, explaining patiently that he cannot allow them access.

If asked, Marwan gladly gives information about everyone and everything under his care, their uses to Talakara, and any other good advice he can come up with. Marwan knows nothing about the upper reaches of the castle and keep, however. Should Talakara be slain in the course of this adventure, the djinni will gleefully take his leave of this plane with many strange tales to tell his sheik on the plane of elemental Air.

Marwan al Ibn (djinn): Int average; AL CG; AC 4; MV 9, fly 24; HD 7+3; hp 34; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; SA whirlwind; SD spells; SZ L; ML 12; MC.

The prisoners here are specimens collected by Talakara for use as spell components. Reduce all experience-point awards for monsters slain while chained, if they cannot fight back.

Cell A contains a troll chained to the wall. This troll has been here for quite some time, since its regeneration keeps it strong no matter how many times Talakara drains its blood.

Troll: Int low, AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 37; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 5-8/5-8/5-12; SA hit three opponents; SD regeneration; SZ L; ML 20 (maddened); XP 1,400 or less; MC.

Cell B is empty, but cell C holds a drained and weakened mind flayer awaiting use in a potion of *ESP.* The mind flayer was knocked unconscious and then bound here with *chains of absorption,* which act as a *rod of absorption* except that the powers absorbed include mental powers as well as spells. The absorbed magic cannot be reused to cast other spells. These chains absorb *knock* spells and prevent the mind flayer's *astral projection* and *plane shift* powers from working.

Mind flayer: Int genius; AL LE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 8+4; hp 23 (normally 44); THAC0 11; #AT 4; Dmg special; SA mind blast, spells; MR 90%; SZ M; ML 15; XP 8,000 or less; MC.

Cells D-J hold a small band of elves, kept here for their value in potions of *longevity.* Elves have suffered greatly under Talakara's rule, largely because their chaotic good beliefs make them very intractable. Talakara has attempted to capture or drive out all the elves in Pandar but has succeeded only in driving the elves that remain to hit-and-run warfare. They are very cautious but tireless in their attacks on her soldiers and temples. This band was captured when its leader was slain during an assault on one of Talakara's larger temples. The seven elves will gladly aid the party if given weapons and armor, though they are very careful to avoid placing themselves in no-win situations.

Elves (7): Int high; AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1+1; hp 2 each (down from 7 each); THAC0 19 (18); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (unarmed); SA surprise, +1 to hit with bow or sword; SD 90% resistant to *sleep, charm;* ML 8; MC.

17. Supplies. These rooms are filled with barrels of red wine and various types of simple food: bags of flour, boxes of smoked or salted meat and fish, barrels of crackers and hardtack. Rats have gotten into some of the food, but most of the it is still edible, if somewhat dry, stale, and salty.

18. Secret Passage. This small passage leads up to the escape route via Natasha's tower and the postern gate (areas 14 and 15).

19. Tower Basements. These empty chambers once stored weaponry and siege supplies, but these items have long since crumbled or been carried off.

20. Crypt and Boiler Room.

> A large moss-covered vat with a stone bottom sits in this humid room. Pipes run up from the vat into the ceiling. A large pile of wood is stacked against the wall opposite the door. Beneath the stone vat, a bonfire rages in a shallow, blackened pit. There are two spots of bright blue fire in the center of the pit, but the rest of the fire is yellow and orange.

The castle was once fully equipped with hot and cold running water, but now most of that system has fallen into disrepair. The little hot water that is still needed is provided by a pair of elementals, one of water and one of fire. They are bound here by powerful magicks and are "fed" each day by one of the skeleton soldiers who hauls water from the well to pour into the vat and tosses wood into the pit. Another warrior chops the wood in the forest and stacks it here to cure. The main purpose of the boiler room is to provide a source of heat for the keep in the cold mountain winters; the hot water system was an afterthought to the original construction.

The fire elemental in the pit hates his job. His name is Ignatz, and he knows that a water elemental lives above him but he cannot escape to attack her. In Ignatz's hatred, he tries to boil and evaporate the water elemental in the vat above. In the process, of course, he heats the water for use by the denizens of the castle. To prevent a rampage, the elemental is held in place by a magical diagram engraved in the floor, now blackened and covered with soot but still intact. Anyone coming within 10' of the fire pit has crossed over the diagram into Ignatz's territory and will be mercilessly attacked.

Ignatz (fire elemental): Int low; AL N; AC 2; MV 12; HD 16; hp 73; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 3-24; SA set fires; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; SZ L; ML special; XP 10,000; MC (elemental).

The vat is occupied by Lorella, a water elemental summoned from Talakara's basin (see area 71). Lorella fears the fire elemental (she evaporates quite a bit every day and hates the thought of guests coming to the castle and using too much water). Lorella is very shy and will not show herself, though she will attack anyone who comes close enough to drink or tamper with the water in the vat. The water elemental serves Talakara well, though reluctantly. She guides the heated water up the pipes when needed, and she keeps the hot and cold water separate.

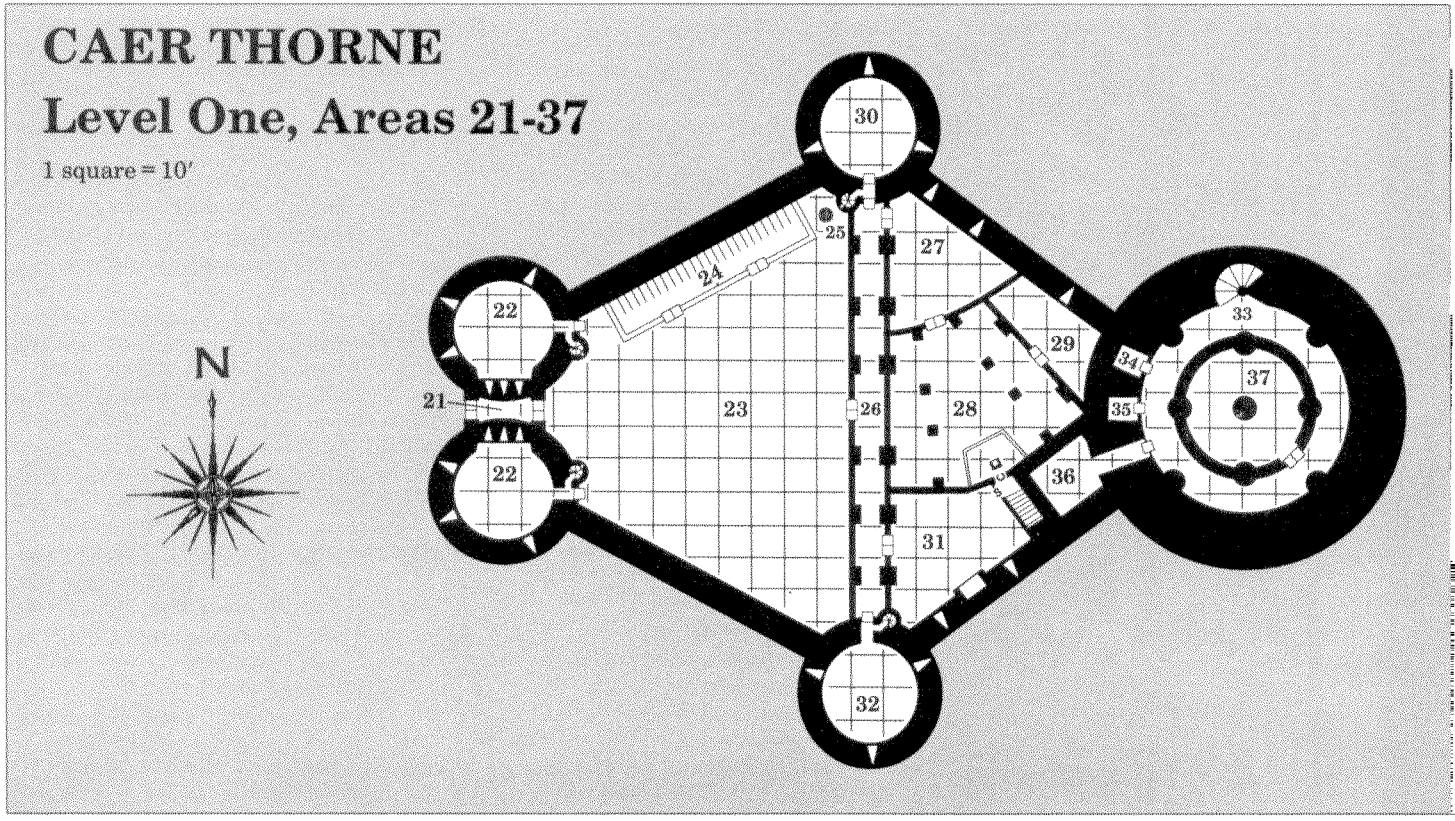
Lorella (water elemental): Int low; AL N; AC 2; MV 6, swim 18; HD 12; hp 50; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 5-30; SA immobilize PCs in water; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; SZ L; ML special; XP 6,000; MC (elemental).

If the water runs for more than a minute or two in any location, the water elemental attacks through the pipes, more out of fear of losing too much liquid than out of anger. Since the taps are narrow and there is insufficient water above to support Lorella, all her attacks are at -2 to hit, with half damage. The only exception to this occurs if someone draws a bath, which allows full strength attacks. Lorella's attacks keep water use in the castle to a minimum, much to the elemental's delight.

The Inner Castle

Agrovale has been able to keep tabs on the party with the help of his shadows, who serve as excellent spies because of their 90% undetectability. These normally vicious, chaotic, undead creatures follow Agrovale's instructions partly out of respect (he is a very powerful member of the undead) but mostly because he wears a *cloak of shadows* (see the description of Agrovale at area 72).

The skeleton warrior has posted shadows throughout the forest, the outer ward, the dungeon, and at locations 26 and 55 of the inner castle. Although some of these shadows have special instructions, most are simply ordered to keep a lookout and report any intruders



to Agrovale. The skeleton warrior is expecting the PCs, so he has ordered the shadows to be especially vigilant.

When the PCs arrive at the castle, Agrovale will normally be in his office at area 51, writing in his diary. As soon as his shadows notify him that the party has entered the castle through the underground passage (area 18) or the main entrance (area 21), the skeleton warrior walks downstairs to the guardroom in area 38, activates his *cloak of shadows*, and crosses the battlements to area 44. He then descends the stairs to the audience chamber (area 28), which is the first place the PCs are likely to encounter him.

The feared and mighty "Goddess" is nothing more than megalomaniacal Talakara, a 19th-level wizard. The mage, now over two centuries old, spends almost all her time on Level Six of her keep. She will normally be encountered in area 71, communing with her (low-level) clerics through her *basin of calling and seeing*. She is much too busy being adored and worshiped to worry about worldly matters. Talakara has placed such concerns (castle security, for example) entirely in the hands of Agrovale. Although she was extremely paranoid around Agrovale when she first gained his circlet from Glasya, he has been nothing but a source of delight to her since she first gave him his freedom 120 years ago. His use of the black rose as a calling card, his spy network (sometimes much more efficient at gathering information than her magical means), his efficient use of the skeleton soldiers in battle, and his completely respectful demeanor have allowed Talakara to relax in his presence and even become somewhat dependent on him.

Level One

21. Entry. All of the entry doors are unlocked, since Talakara has been trying to recruit clerical initiates to her worship. The guards in areas 22 have been given instructions not to bother anyone entering the castle through the front doors. Talakara has placed a *symbol of hopelessness* on the innermost set of doors in order to test the mettle of any who would enter. Anyone who looks into one of the arrow slits lining the walls stares into the expressionless face of a skeleton soldier in the guardroom beyond (area 22).

22. Guardroom. The door to each of these two rooms is locked. Five **skeleton soldiers** stand motionless near the arrow slits in each room. They will not bother the PCs unless the adventurers attempt to open the outer tower door. Should the PCs attempt to enter the tower, the soldiers leave their stations and block the party's way, preventing entrance. The skeletons attack only if the PCs attack first; they have no treasure. The room itself is devoid of furnishings and has bare stone walls, floor, and ceiling.

23. The Inner Ward.

> You have just entered what appears to be the inner ward of the castle. The courtyard is paved and roughly triangular in shape, with a tower at the two opposite corners and the gatehouse behind you at another. There is a long wooden structure leaning against the inner curtain wall to your left. The huge keep looms up in front of you, behind some forebuildings. The only apparent access to the keep seems to be through a set of doors in the wall 100' across the courtyard.

The battlements, 20' up, are crenelated on both sides of the wall walk, and the towers and gatehouse are pierced by many dark arrow slits. All of the fortifications seem to be in fairly good shape, but the whole castle appears to be deserted.

From where the PCs stand at the entrance to the courtyard, the doors to the towers are not readily observable.

24. Empty Stables. This low building houses the phantom steeds of Agrovale's cavalry, currently out on a two-week patrol (all the stalls are empty). Some spare tack and two spare saddles, somewhat moldy with age, hang from wooden pegs between the two pairs of doors. The structure looks barren and abandoned (phantom steeds require no food and make no messes).

25. Well. The water from this well is used to feed the water elemental in the boiler room (area 20). The shaft is 40' deep, but only its last 8' are filled with water.

26. The Astral Plane.

As you pass through the doors, you find yourselves standing in a completely bizarre environment. An unending gray void spreads out in all directions. Thick, tornado-like whirlwinds twist slowly at incredible distances, extending from ahead of you to far behind. The doors behind you swing shut with an ominous click and disappear, cutting you off from the courtyard. Silvery cords trail behind each of you, stretching and intertwining backward into infinity.

You realize you are still standing on a path of gray stone that extends to your right and left before it fades away into nothingness. After a few moments, a chunk of the void coalesces into the rough dark outline of a man.

The party is standing in a very advanced *programmed illusion* of the Astral plane, cast by Talakara to impress visitors. The DM should treat this illusion as if it were real by playing up the eerie infinite space around the PCs, the gentle tug of the silver cords at their backs, etc. PCs who have traveled on the Astral plane will recognize the remarkable similarity but notice that they still feel the effects of gravity. Each vocalized doubt about the reality of the environment counts as an attempt to disbelieve, rolled secretly by the DM. PCs who disbelieve perceive a barren stone hallway with a vaulted stone ceiling supported by buttresses, extending to the left and right. Unlike the illusion, the shadow that confronts the party is quite real.

Shadow: Int low; AL CE: AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 21; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5 + special; SA strength drain, SD +1 or better weapon to hit; SZ M; ML special; XP 650; MC.

While the party is ogling the illusion, the shadow shuts the doors behind the PCs. These portals open normally from the outside but are *wizard locked* from the inside (by Talakara, at the 19th level of ability). The shadow then makes its presence known to the PCs in a nonthreatening fashion. If attacked, it flees toward the guards at area 32. Should the adventurers stop to listen to the creature, read the following passage:

"Welcome, adventurers," the creature of darkness says, its outline fuzzy against the endless glow surrounding it. "My master is expecting you. Please follow me and stay on the path."

This creature has been instructed to lead the party to the door of the receptionist at area 27. It then melts back into the darkness and returns to its post at the entrance.

27. Receptionist. Two arrow slits in the thick wall opposite the door allow outside light into this wedge-shaped room. The walls are covered with frescoes depicting Judgment Day in Pandar. On the wall between the two arrow slits, for instance, is a scene entitled "The Fate of the Sinner," depicting a man withering into dust beside a black rose.

A tall, svelte, blonde woman with wide blue eyes sits behind a desk covered with neatly stacked papers (new edicts for Pandar) and a large book. The woman smiles at the party and introduces herself as Angelica, the receptionist. Angelica politely asks the PCs to sign the visitors' book before their audience with Agrovale. As they are doing so, she casts coy looks at the male PCs.

Angelica is a polymorphed erinyes. The receptionist is dressed in a short black dress, but her belt is actually a *rope of entanglement.* Her dagger is concealed in a garter sheath. Around her neck are two small keys that open the chest and coffer in area 10, and an engraved gemstone-encrusted key (a gemkey, worth 1,000 gp) that unlocks the entrances to the keep in areas 45, 69, and 74. It opens all the *wizard locked* doors in the castle as well. Because the erinyes sometimes works as Talakara's personal secretary, taking dictation and bringing her tea in the mornings, she was given the gemkey so that she could routinely perform her duties.

Angelica (erinyes): Int average; AL LE; AC 2; MV 6 (12 as human), fly 21; HD 6+6; hp 43; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 plus poison; SA poisoned dagger (save vs. poison or faint for 1-6 rounds), spells, *rope of entanglement;* SD spells, immune to fire, half damage from cold and gas; spells: *charm person, suggestion, illusion, infravision, teleport without error, know alignment, animate dead, cause fear, detect invisible, locate object, invisibility, polymorph self, produce flame, summon erinyes* (not done during this scenario); MR 30%; ML 18; XP 8,000; MM1/22.

Angelica is attended by two invisible stalkers, Franz and Heinrich, who normally act as her bodyguards. Over a year ago, Franz was summoned from the plane of elemental Air by Talakara to assist Angelica and defend her from harm. Against all odds, Franz and Angelica fell in love. Since then, Franz has willingly followed the erinyes and obeyed her every command. If any PC dares to flirt with Angelica, Franz temporarily swallows his anger. Later, when the flirting PC enters the audience chamber (area 28), the invisible stalker attempts to trip the party member (save vs. spells or lose initiative in the first round of combat in area 28). Should Angelica be threatened by the party, Franz springs to her defense, gaining +2 on attack and damage rolls because of his ferocity.

Heinrich, on the other hand, has hated Angelica from the moment he was summoned against his will. Although Talakara gave Heinrich the same orders as Franz when she bound him into Angelica's service, Heinrich has sought to pervert his instructions and gain his freedom. The invisible stalker views the romance between Franz and Angelica with thinly veiled disgust and follows Angelica's orders with as much deliberate slowness as he can get away with. He usually rests beside the double doors leading into the audience chamber, awaiting Angelica's next unreasonable command and daydreaming about the windy plane of his birth. If Angelica is attacked, he will stall for one full round before acting in her defense, and even then he will merely try to drive off the weakest PC in the party for one round. Then, having defended Angelica and fulfilled Talakara's original orders, Heinrich returns to his home plane forever.

Franz and **Heinrich** (invisible stalkers): Int high; AL N; AC 3; MV 12, fly 12 (A); HD 8; hp 51 (Franz), 40 (Heinrich); THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 4-16; SA surprise; SD invisibility; MR 30%; ML 14; XP 5,000; MC.

Under normal circumstances, Angelica rises from her chair very slowly and suggestively (she flirts outrageously just to keep Franz jealous) and leads the party to the double doors in the south wall of the room. Once the party has passed through, she locks the doors and goes to her bedchamber (area 30) to get some sleep (taking her bodyguards with her).

28. Audience Chamber. Talakara often likes to make special appearances to her more devoted priests in this room. The walls are covered with crude murals depicting vast throngs of worshiping followers kneeling in homage. Above the throne is carved the following inscription: "Kneel to Talakara, Queen and Goddess of Pandar!"

> You have entered what appears to be a large, wedge-shaped audience chamber lit by four great braziers, one in each corner. The room is over two stories tall, with massive columns supporting the vaulted stone ceiling. Stained glass windows filter fiery light into the chamber, adding to the braziers' diffuse red glow. Across from you, on a raised dais, a tall figure in dark gray plate armor sits on a carved ebony throne.
>
> "Thank you for accepting my invitation," he says, as a wall of fire erupts around the dais. A side door opens, and skeletal soldiers stream out with their long swords drawn.

Agrovale wants to test the PCs, to see if they stand a chance against his mistress. He sits in a carved ebony throne created by Talakara. On its right arm are four gems, each of which activates a spell at the 19th level of ability, usable once per day:

—Ruby: *wall of fire*
—Sapphire: *magic missile*
—Emerald: *protection from normal missiles*
—Topaz: *know alignment*

These spells can be activated only while someone is seated on the throne, but they remain active once triggered. If any gem is pried from its setting in the throne, both gem and throne lose all their magical properties. The throne weighs 500 lbs.

Agrovale has already activated the emerald and topaz gems before the party enters. He activates the ruby gem as he issues his welcome. Agrovale hopes to remain shielded from melee by his squad of 20 **skeleton soldiers,** his high (90%) magic resistance, and the throne's *wall of fire* and *protection from normal missiles* effects. He activates the throne's sapphire gem in the first round of combat and aims all six *magic missiles* at one PC of good alignment. Given his centuries' old dislike of priests, Agrovale is more likely to target a cleric than a warrior or wizard. Because of his obscurement behind a smoking *wall of fire,* it might appear as if Agrovale cast the spell himself, thus reinforcing any PC fears that they face a spell-wielding death knight.

In the wall behind the throne is a 2′×5′ rectangular hole covered by an illusion of continuous wall. In the second round of combat, Agrovale leaves his skeleton soldiers battling the PCs and exits through this hole. He then enters the keep and awaits the party in area 70. Agrovale's statistics appear at area 72 if needed.

Other than the throne, there is no treasure to be found in this room.

29. Guardroom. This room is empty when not occupied by the 20 skeleton soldiers that have been instructed by Agrovale to enter area 28 and slay the party.

30. Angelica's Bedchamber. This room's plaster walls are painted flat black and covered with two tapestries depicting dark, twisted landscapes (Talakara wanted her receptionist to feel at home). Directly opposite the door, beneath an arrow slit and between the tapestries, a 10′×10′ bed is covered with black satin sheets. A makeup table and a wardrobe flank the door. The short table is covered with small vials of perfume (with names like "Sinful Scent") and cosmetic powder. A small locked box covered with a contact poison (save vs. poison or sleep for 1-5 hours) contains three 1,000-gp diamonds and a pair of gold earrings worth 800 gp. The wardrobe contains several black, seductive dresses.

If Angelica has already been encountered in area 27, she will be sleeping in the bed and her bodyguards, Franz and Heinrich, will be stationed outside the door to the chamber. The two invisible stalkers block intruders from entering the room but attack only if attacked themselves. As an added precaution, Angelica keeps a spare poisoned dagger under one of the bed pillows; she will throw this dagger at any intruders. Wrapped up under the bed are the uneaten remains of her last victim (a peasant) and a small coffer containing 2,100 gp.

31. Sitting Room. This room is always lit by *continual light* spells and a roaring fireplace. The fire is actually an illusion; anyone who approaches within 10′ sees

that the fire gives off light but no heat.

This chamber is used as a waiting or sitting room by Talakara's infrequent visitors. In spite of the thick layers of dust everywhere, the room is quite cheerful. A tapestry depicting a map of Pandar hangs opposite the main door (a secret door is concealed behind it), and a bookcase filled with romances, plays, poetry, and histories lines the wall opposite the fireplace. PCs who conduct a thorough search will notice a badly battered book in the southern corner of the room. Sixty years ago, Agrovale threw this tragedy, entitled *The Fall of Sir Topaz,* against the wall after reading the first scene, which describes the temptation and disgrace of a knight. He has not set foot in this room since except to gather reading material for Cynthia, the "guest" in room 50.

32. Guardroom. Six **skeleton soldiers** stand near the arrow slits, guarding the only entrance or exit to the guest tower (which also includes areas 40, 50, and 55). They will not bother the PCs unless the party attempts to enter the tower and climb the stairs, or unless the soldiers are alerted by the shadow from area 26. The room is otherwise empty.

33. Canyon Corridor. Since the main entrance to the keep is on Level Two, PCs can reach the ground floor of the keep (areas 33-37) only by descending the stairs from area 46.

> Stepping into this curving, brightly lit canyon is a pleasant change from the harsh stone walls elsewhere. There is white sand and dark silt underfoot, carried along by recent rains. The walls themselves are a light orange-brown, a sharp contrast to the deep blue sky. There is little vegetation here, only a few bushes off to your left.

Much like area 26, this is an advanced *programmed illusion.* If the PCs stay here long enough, they will be followed by two vultures that appear to be circling far overhead. Obviously, any PC trying to fly up to them or firing arrows upward will discover the ceiling, doing 2-12 hp damage to flying PCs or destroying the arrows. If the PCs disbelieve the illusion, the results are the same as for area 26. The bushes on the left disguise the doors to areas 34 and 35. The double doors to area 37 are hidden by some larger bushes and cottonwoods on a small bank of silt.

34-35. Meditation Rooms. Each of these tiny chapels is kept bare except for one white serpent to help the initiates conquer their fear of Talakara's holy animal and thus learn to concentrate on the higher order of things. The white serpents are fairly tame and will not attack anyone who does make sudden or threatening moves.

White serpent: Int animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 15; HD 2+1; hp 13, 9; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison; SZ S; ML 8; XP 175; MC (snake, poison, normal). The serpents' poison causes incapacitating sickness for 1-4 days within 2-8 rounds if a save vs. poison at –1 is not made.

36. Robing Room. A large number of black robes with rope belts may be found here, neatly hung up on pegs on the wall. Various ceremonial items are kept here as well, stowed in an iron-banded chest along with a high priest's vestments. These items include bronze and iron censers, braziers, knives, platters, goblets, candle-holders, candelabra, wick-trimmers, and snuffers. Berrigan, the high priest, is currently wearing the finest of the vestments in the temple (area 46).

37. Cells. These are not cells for prisoners but rather cells for ascetic initiates and priests from the lower ranks of Talakara's order. The barracks hold six double beds, a low table, mats for kneeling upon, four bowls, and one horn spoon (a *Murlynd's spoon,* the only source of food for the priests.

The four priests here have renounced worldly things. Their only treasure is an illuminated prayer book dedicated to Talakara's worship. It is worth 50 gp to collectors or sages outside Pandar.

Priests (4): AL LE; AC 10; MV 12; P4; hp 23, 20, 16, 14; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; W 16; ML 13; XP 175; staff; spells: *curse, command, cure light wounds, sanctuary, protection from good, barkskin, hold person* (×2), *silence 15' radius.*

Level Two

38. Vacant Barracks. The usual occupants of this room, 15 skeleton soldiers, are out on routine patrol (they are listed in the random encounters for area E), so the guardroom is empty and bare. The only illumination is provided by outside light coming in through the arrow slits. The murder holes in the floor open directly into the entry corridor at area 21.

39. Armory. The walls of this tower room are covered with weapon racks filled with long swords, 21 light crossbows, dozens of well-balanced javelins, and scores of crossbow bolts. A small, unlocked chest in the center of the room contains 31 normal daggers and one cursed *dagger –2.* The room is easily accessible from the battlements.

40. Empty Guest Room. This poshly furnished bedchamber, lit by light from the arrow slits, can be reached only via the spiral stairs leading up from the guardroom (area 32) below.

This room is used to house Talakara's more prestigious "guests" (those who are not sent directly to the dungeon). The locks on the door, the guardroom below, and the high drop from the roof are meant to prevent such a "guest" from wandering about the stronghold or escaping.

Lavish green tapestries adorn the walls, and a small sink by the arrow slit once provided hot and cold running water (the pipes leading to this room became clogged over 70 years ago). An empty canopied bed, covered with magical linens that are perpetually clean, sits against the east wall. On the bed is a magical pillow. Anyone lying down to sleep on this pillow will fall into a deep but restful slumber for 12 hours. The magical bedding is worth 500 gp.

41. Battlements. Characters walking on this stretch of the battlements will be fired upon by the skeleton soldiers on the tower roof at area 54.

42. Pool of Dried Blood. The battlements here are stained dark brown. Attentive guards on the guardhouse roof and north tower top recently caught one of Talakara's priests exploring the battlements and peppered him with crossbow bolts. Rain has not yet completely washed away all the blood. (The skeleton soldiers received a commendation from Agrovale for their fine marksmanship.)

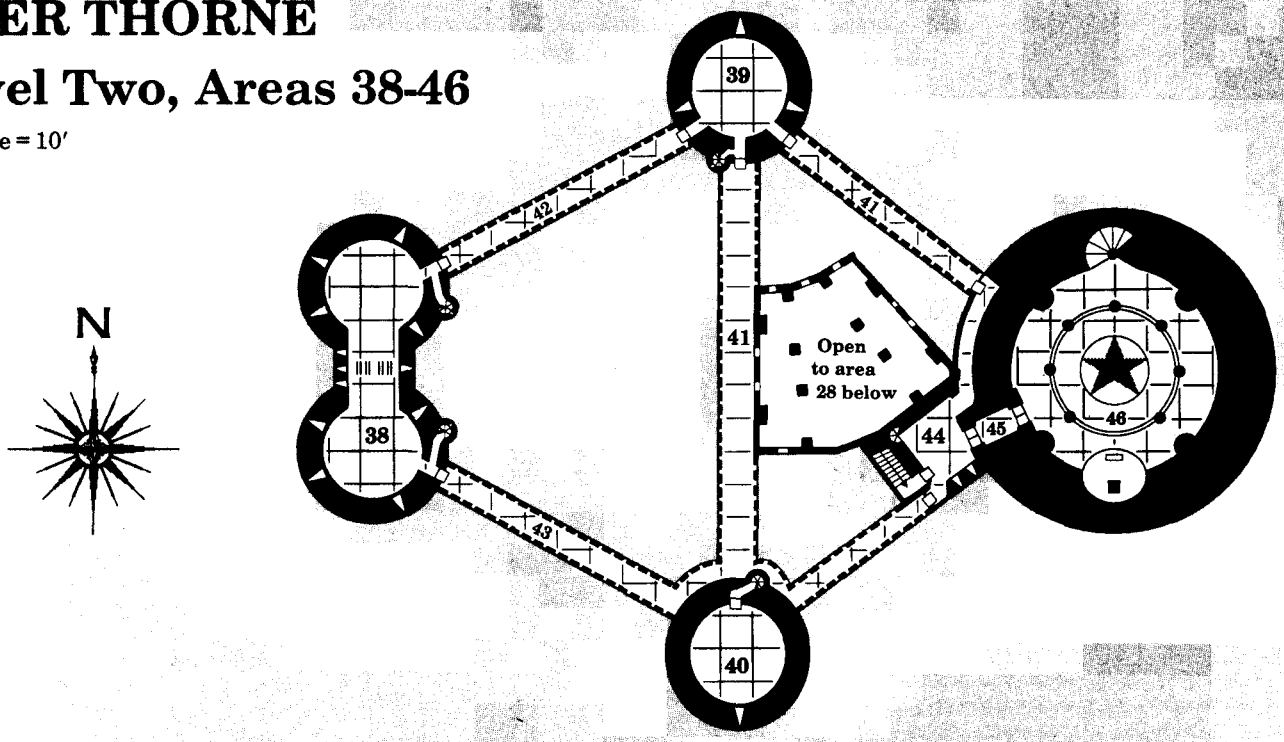
Characters walking on this stretch of the battlements will be caught in crossfire from areas 54 and 56.

43. Battlements. Characters walking on this stretch of the battlements will be

CAER THORNE

Level Two, Areas 38-46

1 square = 10′



fired upon by the skeleton soldiers on the guardhouse roof (area 56).

44. Guardroom. Eight **skeleton soldiers** stand guard in this room, protecting the entrance to the keep. They immediately attack any intruders. The guardroom itself is otherwise empty.

The door to the stairwell leading down to area 28 is covered with an illusion, making it appear to be part of the wall. Years ago, to prevent assassins from sneaking down the stairs and surprising her while she sat on her throne (she was a little paranoid with Agrovale around), Talakara *wizard locked* the door, then cast *permanency* on the *alarm* spells she cast on the landing at the top of the stairs. The spells were cast at the 19th level of experience.

45. Keep Entrance. The original military architects of Caer Thorne placed the entrance to the keep on the second floor of the inner castle to make it less accessible and thus more defendable. Once Talakara moved into Caer Thorne after destroying Pandar's monarchy, the magical portals she installed to defend the keep's entrance made such mundane concerns obsolete.

After his encounter with the PCs in area 28, Agrovale will leave these two sets of mithril portals open behind him so that the PCs can enter the keep. These featureless doors are 6″ thick and, due to powerful magicks bestowed on them by Talakara, impervious to all sorts of physical and magical tampering. Once closed, they can be opened only by a *wish,* a *limited wish,* a gemkey (either Angelica's or Agrovale's; see areas 27 and 72), or Talakara herself. The doors can, of course, be easily opened from the inside. If the PCs reach this area before having met the skeleton warrior in area 28, the doors will be firmly shut.

46. Temple of Talakara.

Beyond the double doors lies a circular temple filled with coils of sweet dark smoke and thin pillars of white alabaster. The walls are hung with earthy brown tapestries, and no light enters from outside. Only candles illuminate the mass being held here. The ceiling is hidden but must be at least 20′-30′ up.

To your right, four or five priests are praying and abasing themselves before a black altar carved with a white serpent symbol. A tall, thin priest wearing rich white robes and holding a staff is leading the congregation. He holds a chalice on high and is pouring from it onto the altar, where the liquid smokes and vanishes. A golden helmet also sits on the altar.

Other details of the room are difficult to see through the incense, but you can make out some sort of mosaic in the center of the floor and perhaps a set of stairs opposite you to the left.

The ceiling here is 30′ up and supported by pillars and arches that provide strength to the roof. Destroying these pillars makes it 60% likely that the floor above will collapse, doing 4-32 hp damage to everyone in the room (save vs. petrification for half damage). The tower is otherwise unaffected structurally, but Talakara immediately comes to investigate. The dust from the collapse reduces vision to 5′, effectively offering 100% concealment from missile fire.

The mosaic in the center of the floor is a pentagram used to summon forces from other planes and to commune with

spirits. The golden helmet is a *helm of opposite alignment* with 11 charges left. The helm is used to bring new worshipers into the church and is worth 500 gp for its gold content alone. The portion of the room within the collonade is down one step from the rest of the temple, and the altar niche in the south wall is up one step. This is not immediately obvious through the smoke, however, and PCs may stumble the first time they enter the center of the room.

The presiding priest here is Berrigan, the tall thin man leading four initiates in prayer. Berrigan is wearing a white robe embroidered with a black circle and trimmed in silver thread. In combat, Berrigan fights to the death because he is afraid of betraying his mistress. As soon as the party enters the temple, he casts *magical vestment, hold person, aid* (on himself), and *cause blindness.* After casting those spells, he either joins his underlings in combat or casts more spells, depending on the situation.

Berrigan: AL LE; AC 8; MV 12; P6; hp 39; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; D 16, C 15, W 17; ML 15; XP 650; staff, vestments, holy symbol; spells: *curse, combine, command, cure light wounds, cause light wounds, aid, enthrall, hold person* (×3), *animate dead, cause blindness, magical vestment.*

The acolytes wear coarse black hooded robes with belts of rope. Each initiate carries an alabaster holy symbol that depicts a white snake biting its own tail. The priests will not take kindly to anyone interrupting them, though if the battle goes poorly for them, they will throw themselves on the mercy of the PCs so as to betray the adventurers later. The acolytes are not very sophisticated fighters. Two of them rush right into combat, one casts a *curse* spell, and one casts a *command* spell before joining in.

Acolytes (4): AL LE; AC 10; MV 12; P1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; W 14; ML 13; XP 35; staff; spells: *command, cure light wounds, curse.*

Talakara is not a goddess, but she does have several thousand worshipers throughout Pandar. Most of them give her no more than lip service, but since the devout are favored and rise rapidly in the ranks, there are several hundred true believers and dozens of low-level priests. The symbol of her priests is a white snake biting its own tail, which is frequently represented in the abstract form of a white circle on a black background.

Talakara's spheres of influence (as she sees them) include necromancy, divination, and healing. Through the faith and devotion of her priests, her followers are able to cast first- and second-level spells. The higher-level spells granted to Berrigan are actually due to the intervention of Glasya, whose status as a lesser goddess allows her to support Talakara for her own ends. Although she supports Talakara now due to ignorance of the latter's plans, Glasya may decline to favor priests with such spells if she discovers Talakara's ultimate goal of grabbing divine power for herself. Talakara cannot actually become a godling without divine backing—which she won't get.

Level Three

47. Keep Armory. This room houses all spare armor and battle gear for the skeleton soldiers. Six crates stacked in the northeast corner each contain 10 great shields. Nine suits of plate mail, four suits of field plate armor, and one suit of full plate armor rest on mannequins lined up around the walls. All of the armor in this room is of human size and kept in well-oiled and battle-ready condition by the skeleton soldiers.

48. Terrace. This is the flat roof of the vaulted audience chamber, area 28. At one time used as a training ground for the skeleton soldiers, the terrace has not seen active use in many years.

49. Storage. Over the years, this room has become the repository for much of the castle's junk. Lit only by outside light through the arrow slit, the room is strewn with piles of broken weapons and garbage. Six large crates beside the door contain enough spare parts to assemble six complete ballistas. Other than that, there is no treasure in the room.

50. Occupied Guest Room. The door to this chamber is locked, and the room itself is furnished much like the chamber below it (area 40), including the magical bed linens. It has recently become the prison of Cynthia, a young human ranger who was captured by Agrovale a month ago while she was hunting monsters in the forest. Rather than destroying her or "converting" her with the *helm of opposite alignment* in area 46, as Talakara wished, the skeleton warrior imprisoned the attractive woman in this room. The pipes leading from the boiler room are only partially functional on this level, providing Cynthia with barely enough ice-cold water to survive.

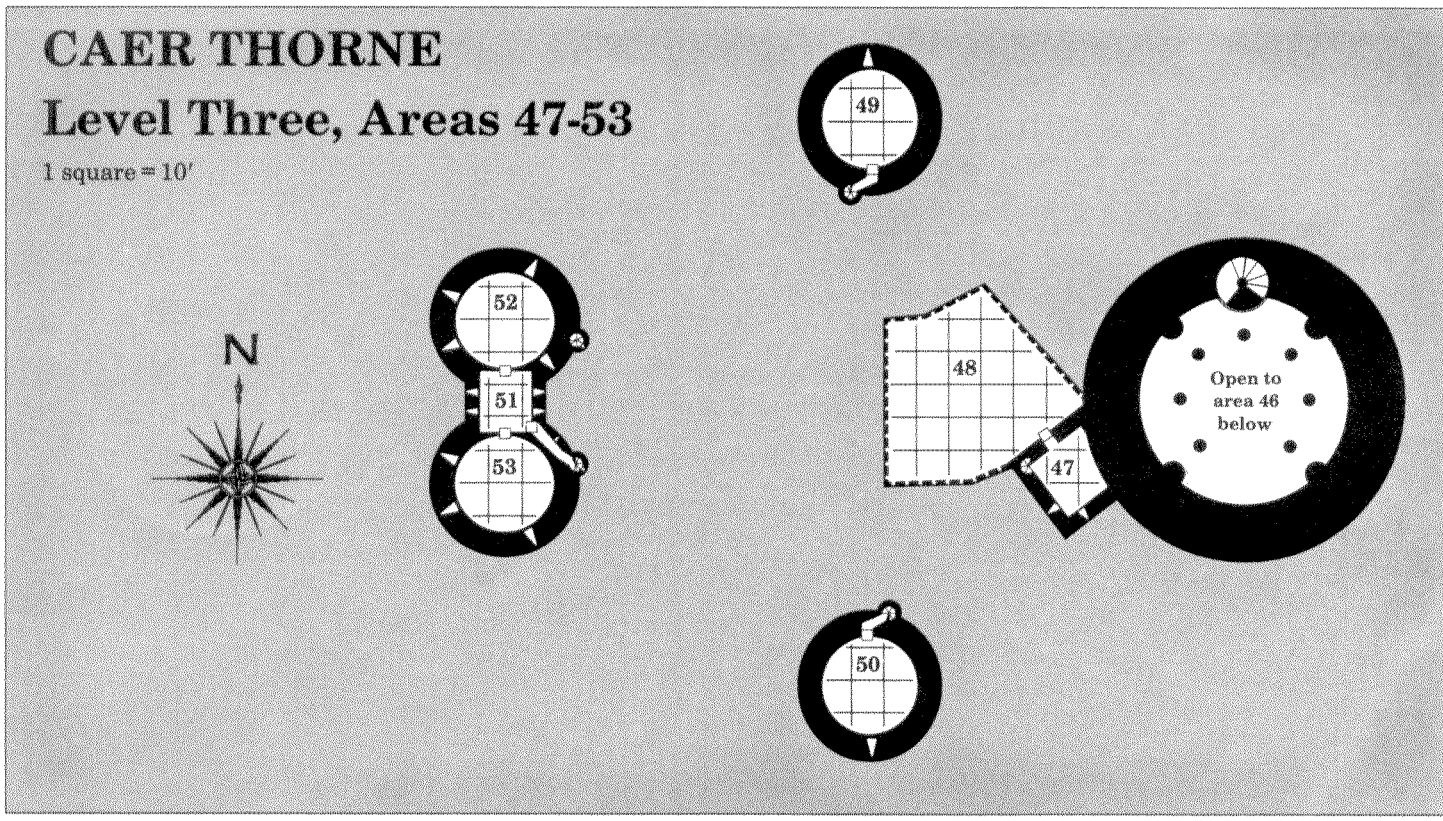
Every morning, Agrovale brings Cynthia a pen and ink, food, and a clean chamber pot. Sometimes he writes her a poem, usually about the sublime beauty of the black rose (or some other uplifting theme). Often she writes her captor a message or poem in return, begging for release. Agrovale has brought her a stack of literature to read, mostly romances and poetry from the sitting room at area 31. He plans to release her eventually, maybe in one or two years, after he has tired of this parody of courtly love.

The skeleton warrior has easily foiled all Cynthia's attempts to escape. Once, when he opened the door to bring her breakfast, she succeeded in pretending to be asleep (she hid the magical sleep-inducing pillow under the bed that night) before bolting out the door. She made it down the stairs before she was stopped by the skeleton soldiers in area 32, and has attempted no escape since then.

Cynthia is fully aware that Agrovale is undead, and although her revulsion has worn off somewhat, her fear has not. She will be extremely grateful to any who rescue her, but she knows nothing about the layout of the castle; Agrovale sedated her with poison when he captured her, and the next thing she remembers is waking up in this room. Should she be freed, Cynthia will gladly join the party if given some armor and a weapon.

Cynthia: AL NG; AC 8; MV 12; R6; hp 51; THAC0 14; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; ML 13; S 15, D 16, C 17. She is proficient with the long sword, long bow, spear, and dagger. All of the gear she wore when she was captured is now in area 52.

51. Agrovale's Office. The door to this room is locked. This chamber, lit by a *continual light* spell, is richly furnished. Nine paintings of exceptional size and quality (worth 1,100-2,000 gp each) decorate the walls, and an extremely valuable rug (worth 4,000 gp) covers the stone floor. A bone-white porcelain vase (worth 2,500 gp) filled with black roses sits on a small table against the west wall, and disordered



vellum sheets cover a huge (4'×10') carved desk in room's center.

Many of the papers on the desk are covered with poetry ("I am a black rose, falling, falling . . ."). A search of the desk and its locked drawers reveals two small jars of black rose powder, a pouch filled with 50 100-gp emeralds, five pots of ink, eight harpy quills, and a set of 24 diaries that accurately chronicle Agrovale's past 16 decades of servitude to Talakara. Much of the writing describes how devoted he has been in serving his mistress (Agrovale does not want to incriminate himself, should the diaries ever fall into Talakara's hands), but sometimes he makes references to his covert operations in countries beyond Pandar. Such allusions are cryptic at best. The day Agrovale set his plan to attract the PCs into motion, for example, is distinguished only by the simple comment: "I delivered the roses to my friends today." The DM can embellish Agrovale's diaries if desired.

52. Agrovale's Treasure. The door to this room is doubly locked, and its handle is covered with virulent contact poison (save vs. poison or die). Only metal gauntlets completely protect against this poison, but anyone wearing leather gloves gains a +4 bonus on the save. Opening the door past 90° triggers three ballistas aimed across the threshold (THAC0 8; hp 3-18 each).

The room itself is bare except for eight locked trunks that Agrovale uses for storage. The trunks contain:

—1. The equipment of Cynthia, the prisoner in room 50. This consists of a human-size set of chain mail, long sword, long bow, quiver of 11 normal arrows and six *arrows +1,* and other normal adventuring gear.

—2. 2,015 pp

—3. 4,140 gp

—4. A human-size suit of *field plate armor +1,* taken from the former King of Pandar's champion. It is much too gaudy for Agrovale's taste.

—5. Empty

—6. Empty

—7. 7,200 gp

—8. Empty

53. Agrovale's Chamber. This room is illuminated only by arrow slits. Six shields, all battle worn, decorate the walls, which are otherwise bare and painted flat black. One, a *shield +4* emblazoned with a black rose, is carried into battle by Agrovale for extra protection.

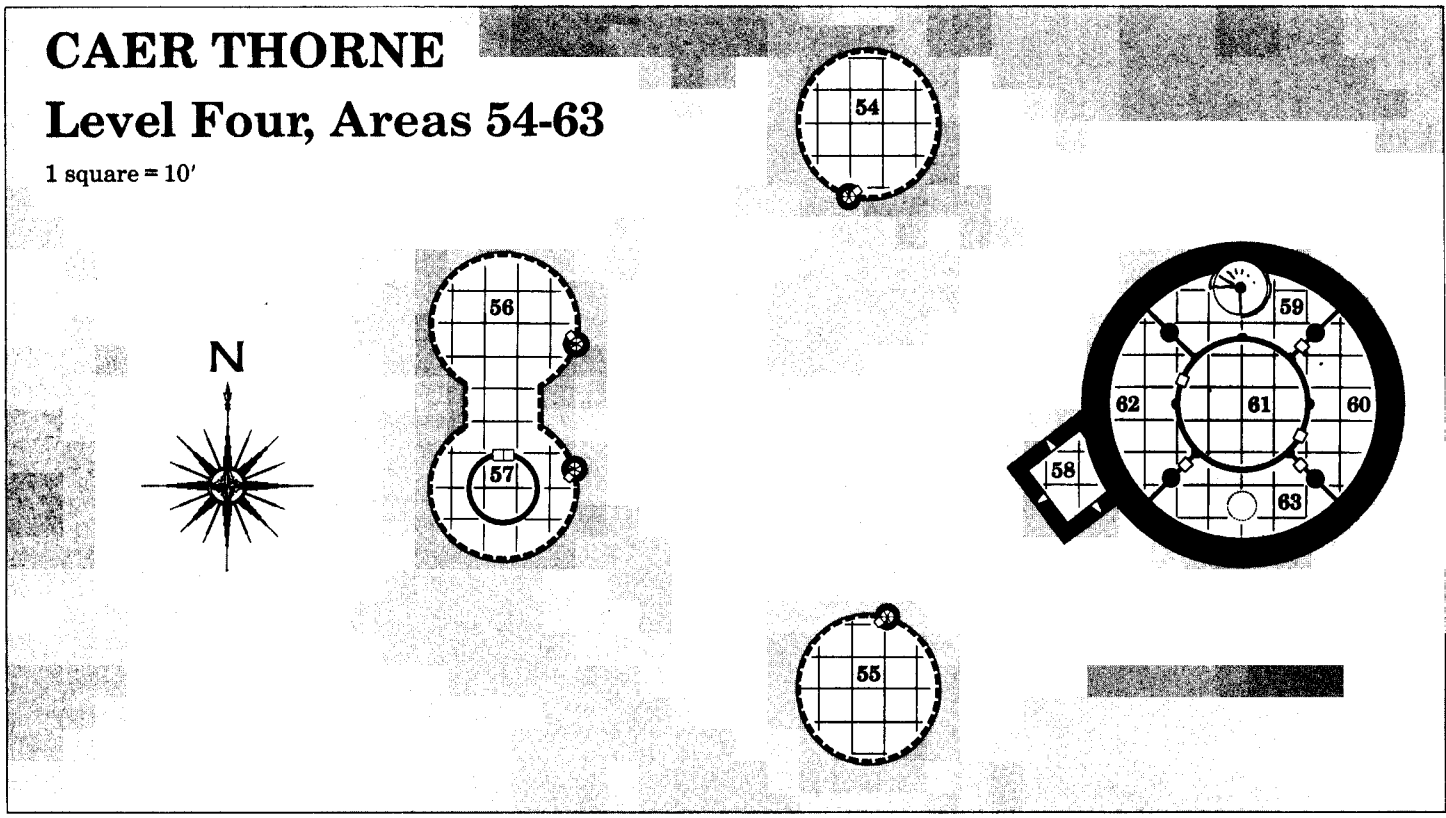
A white marble slab rests in the middle of the stone floor. This is Agrovale's "bed." He never needs to sleep, but old habits die hard. He sometimes rests here when pondering a particularly devious scheme.

Level Four

54. Tower Top. Six **skeleton soldiers** with light crossbows patrol the top of this tower. They fire on anyone walking the battlements in areas 41 or 42 but will not leave their posts to pursue intruders, at Agrovale's orders.

55. Tower Top. One of Agrovale's shadows hides here, keeping a lookout in case the PCs try to sneak into the inner castle by means other than the front door. The shadow immediately notifies his master of the location and number of intruders.

Shadow: Int low; AL CE: AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 23; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5 + special; SA strength drain, SD +1 or better weapon to hit; SZ M; ML special; XP 650; MC.



56. Guardhouse Top. Six **skeleton soldiers** patrol the roof with light crossbows and immediately fire on anyone walking the battlements in areas 42 or 43. They will not leave their posts.

57. Nightmare's Stable. This roughhewn stable serves as home for Blackspike, Agrovale's nightmare steed, which tolerates no mortals near it. Blackspike is not tied or locked in, so it does its utmost to destroy any form of material life that dares enter its stable. It has no treasure.

Blackspike (nightmare): Int high; AL N(E); AC –4; MV 15, fly 36; HD 6+6; hp 36; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/4-10/4-10;SD smoke cloud, go ethereal/astral; SZ L; ML special; XP 2,000; MM1/74.

58. Attic. This forgotten, dirty room is the lair of a spectre, a former priest of Talakara who displeased his mistress. Anselem was chained here and left to die but has since become a somewhat impotent undead, since he is too terrified of his former mistress to take any action against anyone in the castle. Anselem's hatred of living things is so strong, and his frustration so great, that he will gladly throw himself at anyone from the outside, however (including the PCs). The only things here other than the spectre are his chains.

Spectre: Int high; AL LE; AC 2; MV 15, Fl 30 (B); HD 7+3; hp 31; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA energy drain; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; SZ M; ML 15 (special); XP 3,000; MC.

59. Top of the Stairs. This small room is guarded by two grayish-white granite stone golems carved to resemble human males with slim, wiry limbs and serpents for hair. They immediately attack anyone other than Talakara or Agrovale. The golems' heavy tread is muffled by three layers of old carpets on the floor, so combat here will not necessarily be heard elsewhere in the tower.

Stone golems (2): Int non; AL N; AC 5; MV 6; HD 14; hp 60; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 3-24; SA *slow;* SD +2 or better to hit; immune to most spells; SZ L; ML 19; XP 10,000; MC.

60. Arabian Room. Agrovale has disarmed the *wizard lock* on this door, so the PCs should gain easy access. The view through an illusory collonade on the outside wall of the tower affords a view of a structure like the Taj Mahal, a grand white onion dome on the far side of a placid, reflecting river. Twelve handmade rugs cover the floors and those walls not part of the illusory view. One of the carpets is a *rug of smothering,* kept for traitorous clerics.

Eight small stools sit in the middle of this chamber. Sometimes Talakara holds informal meetings here with her initiate priests, who are invariably awed by the room's exotic decor. The chamber is otherwise empty.

61. Laboratory. The doors here are *wizard locked* at the 19th level of experience. Talakara's workplace is kept neat and orderly, with everything labeled and in its place. Her equipment includes alembics, beakers, crucibles, electrovoltaic piles, retorts, distillation columns, separation funnels, exotic solvents, boxes of chalk and paints, jars of various powders, cabinets of spell components, and reagents such as cinnabar, lead, dried salamanders, and bat fur.

An observant PC will notice that much of the equipment in the lab is relatively new. Almost all of it had to be replaced

after Terrekal, Talakara's former apprentice, had an accident while performing an unauthorized experiment with a salamander bladder. He was punished and sent to the gatehouse (see area 1), where he currently languishes in his mistress's disfavor. Luckily for him, Talakara's scrupulously kept notebooks, which cover one entire wall and are numbered and arranged by date, were not damaged by the chemical explosion he inadvertently triggered. These notebooks contain recipes for making potions of *longevity, extra-healing,* and *ESP.* There are also research notes spread out on a worktable detailing exactly how to make a *beaker of plentiful potions.* Talakara is about to begin this project but hasn't yet gathered all the required materials.

62. Workshop. The doors here are *wizard locked* at the 19th level of experience, but the chamber looks more like a sculptor's studio than a mage's workshop. The clue to decipher this mystery lies in the research notes spread out on one of the work tables. These papers detail exactly how to make stone and iron golems. There is enough raw material—a colossal stone block and unworked pigs of iron—to make one of each type of golem. Lying about the room are hammers, mallets, chisels, saws, wood for scaffolding, drop cloths, basins of water, a colossal smelter with a series of molds and files, a small forge with hammer and anvil, and even more esoteric tools. Although the forge is small, the fire elemental Ignatz (see area 20) can be called upon when Talakara works here.

63. Teleportation Pad. The dark circle in the center of the floor provides access to the upper levels of Talakara's tower. Whenever someone steps into the circle and states a destination in Common (such as "up one"), he is transported the appropriate number of levels into a similar circle. The circles are large enough to accommodate seven people at once, only one of whom need state a destination to move everyone inside. Inanimate objects cannot be moved without a person accompanying them, and spells cannot be cast through the circles. People or objects half in and half out of a circle will be left behind. A *dispel magic* spell, if successful against 19th-level magic, causes a circle to become inoperative; thereafter, requesting that level has no effect.

The door leading to this room from area 60 has been unlocked by Agrovale, but the door leading to area 62 is still *wizard locked* (at the 19th level).

Level Five

64. Teleportation Pad. This chamber is guarded by an iron golem molded into the form of an ogre wearing full plate armor and wielding a two-handed sword. There is a 50% chance that the similarity will fool a party at first glance. The iron golem attacks anyone other than Talakara, Agrovale, or Angelica. This room is otherwise similar to area 63.

Iron golem: Int non; AL N; AC 3; MV 6; HD 18; hp 80; THAC0 3; #AT 1; Dmg 4-40; SA poison gas; SD +3 or better weapon to hit; SZ L; ML 20; XP 15,000; MC.

65. Undersea Library. Another of Talakara's sophisticated illusions, the library seems to have a coral reef growing out of the tops of the bookcases. Fish swim above. Even the bright light here seems to be filtering down from the surface of the water, about 20' above.

The contents of the library are just as impressive as the illusions. There are dozens of scholarly works about immortality and the nature of the divine, as well as reference works on magic, summoning elementals, divinations, and charm and the powers of dominance, as well as more general collections of abstract mathematical treatises, historical works, philosophical musings, military texts, alchemical tomes, religious tracts, ancient sagas (largely concerning mages, but also a few warriors and thieves), lists of kings and rulers, tax rolls, several censuses of the realm, works praising Talakara, spy reports, poetry, and compendia of natural philosophical facts about biology, alchemy, geology, and astronomy. In fact, this is one of the best libraries outside the Sage's Guild and certain national collections (in fact, most of it *was* Pandar's national collection). Most subjects are given thorough representation. Pandar figures rather prominently in the historical collections, but other nations are given adequate background as well.

This amazing collection is overseen by an improved form of unseen servants who act as librarians. Anyone holding Talakara's staff who stays here more than five minutes will be asked what works he or she wishes to see. The unseen servants can speak clearly and audibly and are intelligent enough to know the location of every work and to discuss the contents with some degree of accuracy. Anyone not holding the staff who requests a book will be ignored.

The papers strewn about the large table in the center of the room deal with some nearly completed research on how to make a *staff of the magi.* These notes would cut in half the initial time and cost involved in making such an item.

66. Talakara's Spell Books. This is a seemingly bare room except for a table strewn with books—the spell books left behind during the wizards' exodus from Pandar. The collection includes 12 blank traveling spell books and seven blank standard spell books. Talakara has copied all the spells from these books into her own spell books, which are hidden in a bookshelf opposite the chamber entrance. The bookshelf sits behind a wall of stone that appears identical to the other walls of the room. The *wall of stone* (cast at the 19th level of experience) can be removed by a successful *dispel magic* spell.

A guardian familiar rests in the bookcase behind the *wall of stone* and will attack anyone who touches her mistress' books. Talakara's spell books contain all 1st-5th level spells plus: *guards and wards, mass suggestion, ensnarement, legend lore, programmed illusion, enchant an item, banishment, charm plants, Drawmij's instant summons, power word stun, permanency, mass charm, maze, sink, energy drain,* and *wish.*

Guardian familiar: Int animal; AL LE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 1; hp 6; THAC0 19; #AT 3: Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-6; SA/SD improving AC, damage, and movement; MR 95%; SZ S; ML special; XP variable (calculate the cumulative XP value of all slain incarnations); FF/49.

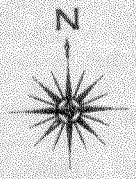
Level Six

67. Teleportation Pad. To further help the PCs carry out his plan, Agrovale has dismissed the invisible stalker that normally guards this room. The teleportation pad operates much the same as the one in area 63.

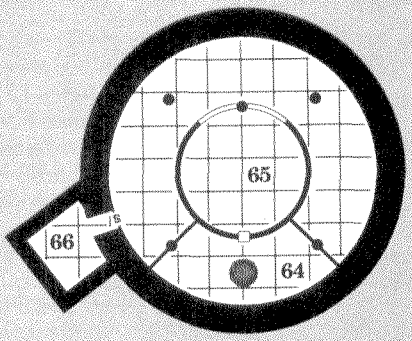
Ten large tapestries (worth 500-800 gp each) decorate the walls, but the room is bare of any furniture.

CAER THORNE

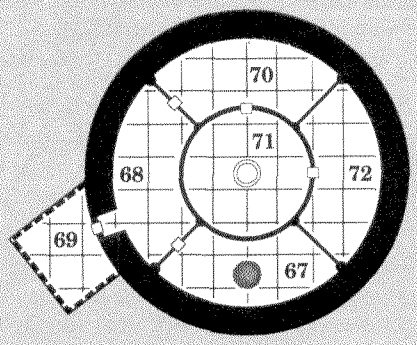
1 square = 10'



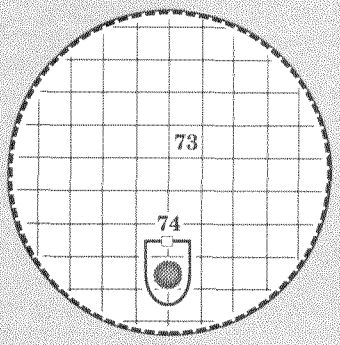
Level Five, Areas 64-66



Level Six, Areas 67-72



Level Seven, Areas 73-74



68. Dining Room. The door to this clean, tiled room is unlocked thanks to Agrovale. The room is decorated in dark, heavy woods and rich red tapestries. Light comes from a central chandelier hanging from the ceiling and golden candle holders mounted all around the walls. Twelve chairs surround a single oak table set with a linen tablecloth and antique silver service. There are no facilities here for preparing food, but the magical tablecloth can generate a *heroes' feast* once a day and is worth 1,000 gp. The silver is worth a total of 4,000 gp if carried off (it weighs 100 lbs.), but the gold candle holders are only gilded lead.

69. Dining Terrace. The door to the terrace is as impregnable as the portals in area 45. If the day is sunny, a small table and three chairs are set up here for afternoon tea. Talakara and Agrovale (and formerly Terrekal) met here to discuss strategy and philosophy. The terrace is currently deserted.

70. Talakara's Bedchamber. The door to this sumptuously appointed room is unlocked, thanks to Agrovale. The floor is strewn with intricate rugs and a polar-bear skin. The walls provide views of an endless abyss full of flying creatures (Talakara's memories of a trip to the Plane of Air), and diffuse magical light shines off dozens of reflecting surfaces.

A small basin with hot and cold running water and a white ceramic half-tub with its own set of taps sit in the east end of the room. (Note that the water elemental will attack according to the rules in area 20 if anyone runs the water for more than a minute; Talakara has been very careful.)

There are several sets of drawers holding a variety of silk and lace garments, and a wardrobe full of long cloaks, robes, and boots. A folding screen depicting dark storms and dragons provides a dressing area. The bed appears to be a small cloud, with an illusory rising sun providing both a headboard and the room's source of light. The whole effect is slightly jarring and somewhat tasteless.

Agrovale, is hiding in the shadows here, using his magical cloak. He is waiting for the PCs to enter area 71 so that he can lock them in with Talakara, thus forcing them to get his circlet.

71. Talakara's Scrying Room. Agrovale has unlocked the door with his gemkey so that the PCs have at least some chance of taking Talakara by surprise. As usual, the wizardess is using her *basin of calling and seeing* to communicate with her priests and congregations throughout Pandar. When the PCs open the door, read the following to the players:

> The portal opens into a small, circular garden with vine-covered walls. Moss covers a great stone basin in the center of the room. A woman of indescribable beauty stands on the opposite side of the pool, peering into its depths. You hesitate for a second, momentarily awed by her overpowering presence, while the lady looks up from the water's glasslike surface.

The garden setting of this room is merely another of Talakara's illusions. In reality, the chamber is bare except for her magical basin.

When the party enters, Talakara is standing over a *basin of calling and seeing*, a gift from a prince on the elemental plane of water. The stone basin is normally 8' in diameter, and when filled with a thousand gallons of water it can serve as a *crystal ball* with *clairaudience* and *telepathy*. The command word "Tiny"

causes the basin to shrink to the size of a salad bowl, suitable for transport.

Currently, a water elemental lives in the bowl, conjured by Talakara over two years ago to provide information about his home plane. To the wizardess's dismay, the elemental did not want to return home after she had finished with the interrogation (one of the drawbacks of her divinely high charisma). Since she had already sent the last such devout elemental down to the boiler room, Talakara supposed she would just have to put up with the water elemental constantly praising her for her beauty, power, and divine magnificence. Of course, he may well be a spy for the water elemental prince in his spare time.

Otto (water elemental): Int low; AL N; AC 2; MV 6, swim 18; HD 12; hp 96; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 5-30; SA immobilize PCs in water; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; SZ L; ML special; XP 7,000; MC (elemental). Otto normally stays hidden in the basin, staring up adoringly at the wizardess while she is scrying, but he will immediately defend Talakara should she be threatened.

If the party does not immediately attack, read the players the following:

> The lady looks at your party and smiles, eclipsing the sun with her radiance. The color of her hair and the shade of her eyes are mere details, easily forgotten, in a face and form that can only be described as perfection.
>
> She speaks, and her voice is at once vibrant with power and sweet with honey: "Come in, come in. Welcome. To what do I owe this delightful intrusion?"

Talakara, through the extensive use of *wishes* (cast one a month for the past few decades), has been trying to become an immortal. Through this powerful magic, she has permanently lowered all her saving throws to 2 (regardless of any penalties) and has increased her intelligence, dexterity, and charisma to rival the gods. This frequent use of *wishes* has not been without its cost, as she has had to devote increasingly more *wishes* (from other sources) to maintaining her constitution and her youthful appearance. She has spent years researching how to make *longevity* potions, which she hopes will further offset her use of greater magicks.

As soon as the PCs enter the room, Talakara's mind works furiously. Although she could easily escape by *teleporting* away, she is much too curious about how the party has managed to reach her inner sanctuary. Almost immediately upon seeing the party, she concludes that either the PCs were very lucky, are incredibly powerful, or had outside help (she won't suspect Agrovale since her wisdom is not exceptional).

Talakara first tries to dazzle the PCs with her divine charisma as she casts a *mass suggestion* spell: "Why don't you leave all those nasty weapons right here and come with me to a comfy cell where you can wait until I have more time." The PCs are, as far as she is concerned, mere mortals. Should the party have the audacity to attack her, Talakara becomes nasty very quickly. Although she hasn't memorized many death-dealing magicks—she had, after all, planned on lounging around the castle today—Talakara is still a threat.

Talakara: AL LE; AC -6; MV 12; W19; hp 58; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; SD permanent *detect good, detect invisibility, protection from normal missiles, protection from good* spells cast on herself, low saving throws; ML special; XP 16,000; D 21, C 15, I 20, Ch 23; spells: *charm person, friends, magic missile* (×2), *unseen servant, alter self, ESP, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image, web, dispel magic, fly, hold person, lightning bolt, suggestion, bestow curse, fire shield* (chill version), *ice storm, phantasmal killer, polymorph other, cloudkill, domination, telekinesis, teleport, wall of force, ensnarement, guards and wards, mass suggestion, banishment, Drawmij's instant summons, power word stun, mass charm, maze, sink, energy drain.*

Talakara wears or carries the following magical items:

—A *ring of healing* that can *cure critical wounds.* Worn on her right hand, it has only two charges left.

—A *ring of water elemental command,* worn on her left hand. It is mostly to blame for Otto's devotion.

—A *scarab of protection,* worn around her neck.

—*Bracers of defense AC 2,* worn around her wrists.

—A *dagger +3* named Blitzblade, in a sheath at her side. Twice per day the dagger acts as a *shocking grasp* when it hits, inflicting an additional 1d8+18 hp electrical damage. Talakara will draw and use this weapon only when in extreme difficulty.

—A *staff of power* having slightly variant powers, with 28 charges remaining. The following functions expend one charge each: *continual light, lightning bolt, darkness, fumble, levitation, cone of cold.* These functions require two charges each: *disintegrate, paralyzation, globe of invulnerability.* To activate a particular spell-like function, the wielder must stamp the butt of the staff against the floor and utter a command word (a different one for each function, determined by the DM). This staff also commands the *unseen servants* in the library (area 65), and it grants a +2 on saving throws and armor class.

Defended from physical assault by Otto, Talakara quickly assesses the strengths of the party. If there appear to be a few spell-casting PCs in the party, Talakara uses her staff to invoke a *globe of invulnerability.* She then uses *power word stun* and *maze* spells to incapacitate the most powerful of the PCs. As long as she herself is not physically harmed, she continues her attempt to capture and subdue the party, using such spells as *web, hold person,* and the like. Such valiant adventurers, once

"converted" by her *helm of opposite alignment* (area 46) might serve as powerful allies.

If one of the PCs actually dares to strike her with a weapon, however, Talakara flies into a rage. "You stupid mortals!" she shouts. "Can you not see that you are fighting a goddess? I will squash you as I would a bug!" She then casts a *lightning bolt* at the party, followed by other damaging spells such as *cloudkill, phantasmal killer,* and *energy drain.* If wounded, she heals herself with her ring and keeps fighting. Only once the second cure is exhausted will she use a *dimension door* spell to enter area 72 where she keeps her *ring of wishes* for use in an emergency. She uses two of the *wishes* to heal all her hit-point losses and restore her cast spells to memory. Talakara then casts *guards and wards* to prevent her enemies from escaping (this takes one turn), and sets off to hunt down the entire party, determined to slay them mercilessly at whatever cost. If surrounded and hit with sufficient damage to slay her (so long as she is not below –10 hp), she will invoke a retributive strike from her staff if she can pass a system-shock check.

Agrovale remains hidden in room 70 throughout the party's encounter with Talakara. He has studied Talakara's behavior and battle strategy for the past two centuries, and has anticipated all her possible reactions to the party's intrusion. In all cases his intuition has proved precise; Talakara's lawful nature, over the years, has made her extremely predictable.

If the party defeats Talakara, by killing her or by forcing her to *dimension door* to room 72, Agrovale shuts the scrying room door and activates its *wizard lock* with his gemkey, trapping the PCs in area 71. He wants to force the PCs to open the door to room 72, where Talakara keeps the circlet that imprisons his soul.

72. Talakara's Treasure Chamber. Talakara has devised a simple but effective way of barring Agrovale access to this vault. Instead of being protected by numerous magical wards that Agrovale, with his high magic resistance, could ignore, the massive metal door to this room is closed by a masterful lock (–50% for a thief's attempt to pick) and is barred from the inside by a 12"-thick oak bar, lifted into place by Talakara using *telekinesis.* Since Talakara can gain entrance to the chamber by using a *teleport* or *dimension door* spell, she disintegrated the key long ago as a further precaution. Sure enough, Agrovale has never been able to break or bypass the door.

Inside the chamber is a great heap of 40,201 gp, 6,778 pp and four locked iron boxes containing:

1. Dainty *slippers of spider climbing* and an ermine-lined *cloak of displacement* that Talakara sometimes wears to festive occasions.

2. Ten flawless diamonds worth 5,000 gp each and a *ring of three wishes* for use in an emergency.

3. A robe made out of cloth-of-gold and sewn with countless gemstones (worth a total of 15,000 gp). Talakara wears this valuable vestment when administering her duties as a goddess.

4. A plain golden headband resting on a lavender pillow. Talakara has used a *wish* to ensure that the circlet will be *teleported* back to the lower planes if she is murdered by Agrovale. Talakara described her precaution to the skeleton warrior when she granted him more freedom and responsibilities 120 years ago. Not knowing if his mistress was bluffing, the dread of his circlet returning to the lower planes has prevented Agrovale from personally slaying his mistress.

That discussion precipitated this entire adventure for the PCs. Agrovale decided that if he could not murder Talakara without putting his circlet in peril, then perhaps he could cause her to be killed by others. In all respects, Agrovale's planning and logic have been impeccable; should the PCs destroy Talakara, the magic protecting the skeleton warrior's circlet will dissipate, leaving it undisturbed on the pillow.

The skeleton warrior waits outside the door in room 70, preventing the party's escape, until either the PCs open the portal to this room (area 72) or are destroyed by Talakara. Should Talakara kill all the PCs, Agrovale has lost nothing. He shrugs his shoulders, returns to his office, and begins hatching a new plan to defeat his mistress. If the PCs manage to open the door to the treasure vault (a simple *knock* spell will suffice), whether Talakara is alive or not, Agrovale can at last make his move in a final gambit to save his soul.

Agrovale (skeleton warrior): Int exceptional; AL N(E); AC –1; MV 6 (12 with cloak, see following); HD 14 (formerly F14); hp 101; THAC0 7 (0 with dagger, –1 with sword); #AT 2 (with dagger), 5/2 (with long sword), 7/2 (with both; special); Dmg sword 1d8+7, dagger 1d4+5; SA +3 hit probability with weapons, causes beings 5 HD or less to flee in panic; SD struck only by magical weapons, cannot be turned, standard undead immunities as per skeleton (MC); S 18/88, I 16, W 17; MR 90%; ML 20; XP 4,000; FF/79, MC (warrior, skeleton).

Agrovale keeps the keys to all the mechanical locks in the castle except room 72 on a ring in a belt pouch. He also possesses the following magical items:

—A suit of *field plate armor +3* that he wears constantly.

—A *long sword of wounding +1,* always in a black scabbard at his side. The sword's name is Teargiver, and those hit with the blade must save vs. poison or lose initiative during the next round because the pain is so great. Agrovale specialized in this weapon as a mortal and can attack with it five times every two rounds, with +7 to hit (strength +2, SA +3, specialized +1, sword +1), and +7 on damage (strength +4, specialized +2, sword +1).

—A *dagger of venom +1* kept in a black scabbard. This special dagger injects white rose venom (save vs. poison at –4 or sleep for 1-10 hours) into its victim when a modified roll of 20 is scored. (For Agrovale, this is a roll of 14.) There are four doses in the hilt. Agrovale's combat modifiers are +6 to hit (strength +2, SA +3, dagger +1), +5 on damage (strength +4, dagger +1) when he wields the magical dagger.

—A *cloak of shadows,* generally worn on trips or when there are visitors in Caer Thorne. This powerful magical item allows its wearer to assume the form of a shadow (MV 12, 90% undetectable) by pulling the hood up over the head, three times per day for up to an hour per use. The cloak's wearer can also summon 1-4 shadows, who arrive within 1-6 days and perform one simple task for the summoner. Should the cloak's wearer be neutral or evil, the shadows will linger and await further commands, but otherwise the shadows depart as soon as their required task is completed.

—A gemkey (see area 27) that unlocks the entrances to the keep in areas 45, 69, and 74, given to Agrovale by Talakara to assist in his duties. It will open all the *wizard locked* doors in the castle as well. Agrovale wears his gemkey on a gold chain around his neck at all times.

As soon as the PCs open the portal to the treasure vault, Agrovale bursts into room 71 with sword and dagger drawn. He continues on, charging into the treasure chamber shouting, "Out of my way, mortals!" The DM should ask the PCs if any are going to block the skeleton warrior's entrance to the room. Agrovale ignores almost any spells cast at him (by either the PCs or Talakara, if she is still alive) because of his high magic resistance, but any who step in his way become subject to his focused fury.

Attacking seven times every two rounds (two sword, one dagger the first round; three sword, one dagger the second), without the normal two-handed attack penalties due to his charging and berserk state, the skeleton warrior plows through any opposition while moving at double his normal speed (MV 12) to get to the chest containing his circlet. If he makes it through, he kicks the chest open, throws down his weapons, and grabs the golden headband containing his soul. A heartbeat later, his armor collapses into a clanging pile as both Agrovale and his circlet turn into fine powder.

Level Seven

73. Keep Roof. This roof is windswept and barren. Talakara doesn't bother posting guards here, since she figures that the door at area 74 is impregnable.

74. Teleportation Pad. This door is the same as the portal at area 45. It will remain closed in this adventure unless opened by the PCs from the inside.

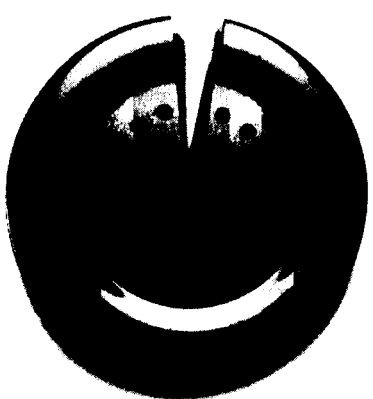
The dark, windowless room beyond contains only a teleportation pad to areas 63, 64, and 67. The operation of these pads is described at area 63.

Concluding the Adventure

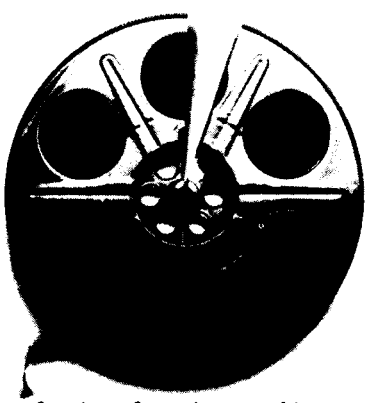
Should the PCs destroy Talakara and witness the death of Agrovale, they can explore the rest of Caer Thorne at their leisure. Rathmund greets them on their return home (Path has informed the druid of Talakara's demise) and tells them that the Order of the Oak will look after Pandar in the future. Cynthia and the elves rescued from the dungeon will want to remain in Pandar and rebuild it to its former glory.

Should Talakara witness the death of Agrovale, she will scream in rage and fight the party to the death in her fury.

Once Talakara has been slain, Agrovale's most trusted shadow (gone unnoticed in heated combat) places a single freshly cut black rose on the wizard's body. It then departs Caer Thorne with all its brethren forever. Ω



Just a fraction of the time we spend on the phone can help answer society's problems.



Just a fraction of our time watching movies could help bring many happy endings.

It takes so little to help so much.

Millions of people have helped establish five percent of their incomes and five hours of volunteer time per week as America's standard of giving.

Get involved with the causes you care about and give five.

Continued from page 3

The Dead Hide Well

I recently purchased issue #23 and just finished reading "Deception Pass" by Rich Stump. I thought it was one of the best adventures you have published. It was very well planned out and very intriguing. I hope my players have as much fun playing it as I will have running it. Helms off to Rich!

However, on page 53 of that issue (first column, fourth paragraph), it says "Wardal hides if he has already been killed." Is this cowardice beyond the grave, or a new spell *hide dead*?

Kedric Meade
Big Stone Gap, Virginia

Some of the worst typos to catch are those that create perfectly grammatical sentences. The sentence in question should read "Wardal hides if he has ***not*** *already been killed." But you already figured that out, didn't you?*

How Barbaric!

In most of the modules in your magazine, magic is of utmost importance, and I have a great love for the arcane powers of magic. I have only one problem with that: My players hate magic with a purple passion. They always play barbarians and fighters. This causes problems in our two-year-old campaign. We have had a total of two magic-using PCs, and neither of them lived past 5th level because of lazy warrior characters.

Could you please advise me on a way to turn the tides in this dilemma.

Greg Nutter
Gray, Tennessee

Since you really can't force people to play characters they don't enjoy, my best suggestion is to try to recruit some magic-loving players. Other than that, simply waiting two or three years may solve this problem for you. They've got to get bored with all that hacking and slashing sometime.

Why the Cover Changed

I really liked the wandering monster table in "The Pyramid of Jenkel" [issue #23]. The way that Willie Walsh put in brief descriptions of the monsters' intentions, etc., was much more interesting than plain statistics.

I also have a few things in your magazine to address:

1. A few people have requested high-level adventures. I would kill for just one *level-one* adventure. It's nice that you have 2nd-level adventures, but I would like just one 1st-level module for the AD&D game.
2. Why don't you have a map key in *all* your issues? It would be nice.
3. How come some of your issues have had cardboard covers and some don't? I like the cardboard.
4. When I'm reading all of the room descriptions in a module, it helps me to have the map of the dungeon or whatever right above. Flipping back or ahead to the map is a real pain.
5. If you publish this (yeah, right), please publish my address.
6. Do you have to enclose a SASE if you want unaccepted work thrown away?

Bill Keevan
P.O. Box 473
Blue Hill, Maine 04614

1. We print what we get. I'll be happy to publish an adventure for 1st-level characters when I get a good one. In fact, I think it would be fun to publish an adventure for a 0-level PC party.

2. I thought you'd get bored if we ran the map key in every issue. I see it more as a once-in-a-while reminder. Most of the icons we use on our maps are self-explanatory. Diesel tries to make a fireplace look like a fireplace, and a pile of rocks look like . . . you get the idea. You shouldn't have to constantly refer to a key to find out what's what. Which brings us to:

4. (Yes, I know I skipped #3.) We try to space maps and illustrations evenly throughout the text. Maps that cover large areas may have text references on many pages, so it's usually impossible to avoid some page flipping. Many DMs photocopy the maps so they can be highlighted in color or drawn upon as the party explores.

3. We switched to a lighter cover stock with issue #22. This allows us to use full color on the inside covers. We'd planned to replace the brown mailing wrappers with sealed plastic bags at that time, but the latter change has lagged behind.

5. See above.

6. It's always good form to enclose at least a letter-size SASE with any submission. It makes it so much easier for us to return the contracts (or the rejection letters). You may also consider sending a larger envelope that can hold your whole submission, just in case we would like to return your adventure for revisions. Subjectively, if it appears you don't care about what happens to your submission, we probably won't care either.

Gamer Explosion

I've been DMing for a year now, and I don't think I would be doing such a good job if it weren't for DUNGEON Magazine. You have a great variety of modules for many kinds of players and campaigns.

First, I'm writing to tell something to those DMs who cry for nothing. Ever since I began reading DUNGEON Magazine, I've seen letters from DMs who don't have players. Well, here in Brazil we don't have AD&D books, but I have so many players that we don't have the physical space to play (and we don't have enough chairs, either). Most players I have are old friends, that when I talk about the AD&D game they're instantly interested. And once they're in, there's no way to get them out of the game.

Second, hasn't anybody ever thought of making adventures where mages are the center? I see adventures around clerics (many), fighters (even more), thieves (some), but no wizards! You can see I like wizards; I think it's because they're seen as weak down here, but I think wizards are the most powerful class of all. Shouldn't wizards deserve more attention?

I want to thank your magazine for the great job you're doing and say that you're the only link I have with U.S. gaming. Thanks. Please print my full address if you print my letter.

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